



How to work at home and have a life

You and your money

Section Two, page 9

Is Stephen Sondheim getting away with murder?

Paul Taylor looks at the composer in amorous mood

Section Two, page 6

WEDNESDAY 20 MARCH 1996 (18 45p) 40p

The celebrity way to separate

Britain's most sought-after divorce lawyers

Section Two, Cover Story

Leaders bid to rescue Ulster peace

Plan for elections to go ahead

DONALD MACINTYRE
and COLIN BROWN

John Major and the Irish Prime Minister, John Bruton, are planning talks today in a bid to keep the fragile Northern Ireland peace process on track.

The Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, who are due to speak on the telephone, are determined to press ahead with plans for elections to a negotiating body and for an all-Ireland referendum on peace to meet the 10 June deadline for all-party talks.

The promise of all-party talks is the only hope for rescuing the peace plan and persuading the IRA to resume the ceasefire. Last night, a Cabinet committee on Northern Ireland met for more than two hours in an effort to resolve deep differences between the Provos' parties over how to elect their representatives for the talks.

The Government was having to steer a delicate path to avoid alienating the Ulster Unionists, who believe a referendum is crucial to the success of the all-party talks. At the same time, an electoral system unacceptable in Dublin and the Northern Ireland nationalist community could jeopardise the two governments' chances of beginning the talks before the promised deadline.

One option put to the meeting by Sir Patrick Mayhew, the Northern Ireland Secretary, was for a mixed or "hybrid" system of elections under which the nationalists might win more representation in the peace forum to be set up to thrash out plans for the future of Northern Ireland.



David Trimble: 'Compromise will not work'

By contrast, both the Nationalist SDLP Democratic and Labour Party and Ian Paisley's Democratic Unionists have been pressing for a single constituency system from which the 90 successful candidates would be chosen from one Province-wide ballot paper.

David has been urging the Government to back the single constituency system to win the confidence of the nationalist community in Northern Ireland.

But both Mr Bruton and Dick Spring, the Irish foreign minister, have floated the possibility of a "hybrid" system, combining the electoral list, which is favoured by the nationalists, and the unionists'

demands for the elections on 18 constituencies. That would allow some leading figures to hold secure seats in the forum without being elected under the first-past-the-post system from constituencies.

One option discussed last night was a 110-seat forum from which a much smaller group of negotiators would be chosen. David Trimble, the Ulster Unionist leader, warned that such a compromise would not work. "While we get some silly ideas floated around, at the end of the day, they will have to come down with something that is workable," he said.

He said the list system would be open to legal challenge, forcing the Government to delay the elections until late in the year. He also said it would require a substantial piece of legislation.

The Government's chances of securing Unionist support for a compromise had also been undermined by a separate but related row over the publication of an Anglo-Irish consultation document outlining the framework for the all-party talks. Mr Trimble told Sir Patrick at an armchair meeting yesterday that he believed the document was issued to "appease" the nationalists.

In the wake of warnings by John Taylor, the deputy leader of the Ulster Unionists, that his party might yet bring the Government down, Mr Trimble made strong objections at his meeting with Sir Patrick to what the party sees as a softening of the two governments' demand on the IRA to start decommissioning arms before talks progress.

No financial details have

been released, but they plan to develop motion pictures, videos, animation, theme parks and even a division dedicated to licensing toys, calling the company "one of the most significant business breakthroughs of the 21st century." The new company is similar to DreamWorks, the multimedia enterprise set up last year by the film director Steven Spielberg, the former Disney movie chief Jeffrey Katzenberg and the record producer David Geffen.

Mr Jackson, reading from a prepared statement, said: "My earliest aspiration to be actively involved in all facets of the global multi-media explosion was derived from decades of travelling throughout the world.

I was made privy to the heart

beats of millions of fans who willingly shared with me their hopes, fears and most importantly, their desire for a better life. It was during this time that I first began to appreciate that the proper approach to global family entertainment could go a long way to addressing these concerns."

Prince Alwaleed, the 39-year-old nephew of the King of Saudi Arabia, is worth an estimated \$10bn, and has invested a fortune in real estate, entertainment and hotels since he launched onto the global business stage in 1991, paying \$800m for a stake in the troubled US bank Citicorp.

He made his money first in

the Middle East, winning a

series of lucrative construction contracts. Since then, he has helped bail out Euro Disney, now called Disneyland Paris, and the Canary Wharf development in Docklands, east London. He also beat Rupert Murdoch to a stake in Silverscreen's Mediaset empire and is a leading hotelier, having taken a 27 per cent share of Four Seasons and half of the Plaza Hotel, New York.

The Prince is fanatical about fitness, neither smokes nor drinks, and spends considerable time on the telephone from his Riyadh office, linked by satellite to would-be partners offering multi-million dollar deals.

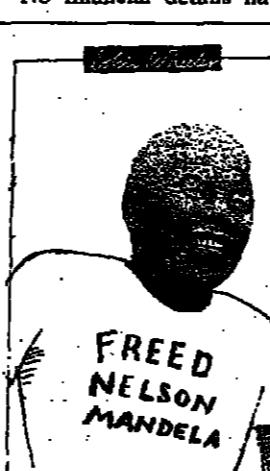
He describes himself as an orthodox Muslim.

He and Mr Jackson, one of

the world's best-selling recording artists, met 18 months ago, and found "they had a great deal in common," a spokesman said from Paris last night – not least a penchant for dark sunglasses.

Mr Jackson has been in the spotlight recently over his relationship to children left in his care. He was divorced from his wife, Lisa Marie Presley, earlier this year. Mr Jackson is a businessman in his own right, whose recordings, concerts and publishing interests have generated \$5bn.

A spokesman defended Mr Jackson's divorced status, despite the new company's emphasis on family values. "More than half the world is now divorced," he said.



Sound success: Michael Jackson and Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Bin Abdulaziz at their press conference in Paris yesterday

Photograph: Reuters

Mandela ends 30 years of love and betrayal

ROBERT BLOCK

Johannesburg

After 38 years of love, political struggle, prison, liberation, personal disillusionment and finally betrayal, the marriage of Nelson and Winnie Mandela ended yesterday in a Johannesburg courtroom.

Judge Frans Eloff closed the chapter on the relationship that carried Mr Mandela through 27 years in prison. His ruling came just one day after the 77-year-old South African President paraded before the whole world his personal pain over his estranged wife's infidelity and their lack of intimacy.

The judge told a courtroom crowded with journalists and a handful of relatives: "The position appears to be clear that on the evidence, that was not challenged, the plaintiff is entitled to a divorce. His claim

is unanswerable and he is entitled to the relief he seeks." The ruling was greeted with anger by Winnie, who stormed out of the courtroom, and with visible relief by Mr Mandela, who smiled and shook his lawyer's hand. But there was a sense of deep sadness among many others.

"We wanted to have a kind of fairy-tale ending," said Archbishop Desmond Tutu. "The couple have suffered so much and now at the pinnacle of their victory, for this dissolution to happen, it's awful for them, but it's also awful for the country. We all seem to be voyeurs peeping into a bedroom where a husband and wife are falling out."

Unlike Monday's hearing, when Mr Mandela talked about his loneliness during the two years he spent with his wife following his release from

prison, and of the pain he felt on learning of her affair with a young lawyer, yesterday's proceedings were tame. But they were not without drama.

In the midst of the hearing, Winnie suddenly and unexpectedly sacked her lawyer, Ismail Semenya. He had earlier questioned Mr Mandela, who begged not to be forced to disclose any more of the painful details concerning his relationship with his estranged wife.

"I appeal to you not to put any questions to me which may compel me to dent the image of the defendant and bring a great deal of pain to our children and grandchildren," he said.

The remaining battle, which starts today in the same courtroom, is about a financial settlement. However, there is also the question of the use of what may be the President's greatest

asset of all – the name of Mandela.

Winnie is claiming that she is entitled to half of the President's estate, which has been estimated by some South African newspapers at £15m. Possibly of even greater importance is her claim to the Mandela name, which she now uses appended after her maiden name of Madikizela.

Many observers believe she

will run in the presidential election in 1999, when Mr Mandela has said he will step down.

End of a fairy-tale, page 8

Government orders review of gun laws

COLIN BROWN

Changes to the gun laws in the wake of the Dunblane massacre were promised last night after John Major assured MPs on all sides that the Home Secretary, Michael Howard, was carrying out his own review.

But the changes, which will be delayed until after the Cullen inquiry into the killings, are likely to fall short of the demands by some MPs for a total ban on private possession of hand guns.

There could be cross-party backbench moves to take more radical action, pre-empting the changes in the law being privately promised by the Government after consultation with the Opposition parties.

The Prime Minister told Mr Blair that Lord Cullen would be asked to consider rules governing the possession of handguns and invited Opposition parties to submit their views after

the Home Office. Full terms of reference for the public inquiry are now being drawn up but Scottish Office sources said a formal announcement was expected around Thursday.

He also supported George Robertson, the Shadow Scottish Secretary, who lives in Dunblane, in a call to reverse the presumption on the police to grant a gun licence unless they find strong reasons why it should be withheld.

Mr Blair and Mr Major gave a clear signal at Prime Minister's question time that they want to make progress with cross-party consent.

The Prime Minister told Mr Blair that Lord Cullen would be asked to consider rules governing the possession of handguns and invited Opposition parties to submit their views after

the Home Office. Full terms of reference for the public inquiry are now being drawn up but Scottish Office sources said a formal announcement was expected around Thursday.

Officials at the Home Office and the Scottish Office will consult the Firearms Consultative Committee – which has a rolling brief to update gun regulations – as part of a detailed consideration of the lessons to be drawn. The findings of the review will then be passed on to the Cullen Inquiry.

Mr Blair, who accompanied the Prime Minister on an emotional visit to Dunblane last Friday, said: "It would be sensible to begin at least examining these issues now on an all-party basis."

Mr Major told him: "I know the Home Secretary would welcome the views of other parties,

IN BRIEF

Fisk takes prize

Robert Fisk, Middle East Correspondent of the *Independent*, has been awarded the first SAIS-Ciba Prize for Excellence in International Journalism, awarded by Johns Hopkins University in Washington DC. The prize was awarded for his series "Inside Algeria", published in the *Independent* in March 1995.

Grappelli unwell

The French jazz violinist Stephane Grappelli, 88, has been admitted to a clinic for "observation" after being taken ill, his agent said yesterday.

Today's weather

Mainly cloudy with best of any sunshine in western areas. Section Two, page 29



section
ONE

BUSINESS 16-20 COMMENT 14,15 CROSSWORD 24 GAZETTE 12 LEADING ARTICLES 14 LETTERS 14, OBITUARIES 12 SHARES 20 SPORT 21-24 UNIT TRUSTS 19

section
TWO

ARTS 6-8 BRIDGET JONES 5 CHESS 30 CROSSWORD 30 FINANCE 15,16 LAW 21-23 LIFE 4 LISTINGS 28,29 MONEY 9-14 TV & RADIO 21,32 WEATHER 29

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12

news

Four out of ten marriages set to end in divorce

NICHOLAS TIMMINS
Public Policy Editor

More than four out of ten marriages are set to end in divorce, figures published today suggest. And the current attempts to reform the divorce law are unlikely to alter a trend that has already given England and Wales the highest rate of divorce in Europe, statisticians at the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys believe.

The projection of a new high in the proportion of failed marriages is, however, a "conservative" estimate, according to John Haskey, the OPCS statistician who made it, for it is based

on the assumption that divorce rates by duration of marriage do not change from their levels in 1993/94. Such rates have, however, been rising.

Calculations based on 1987 figures suggested that 37 per cent of marriages would finally end in divorce. Six years on, today's figures suggest the proportion will be 41 per cent. Some groups - couples where the husband married as a teenager, or where individuals remarried in their early twenties - already exceed that figure, while the divorce rate for some men who remarried in their early twenties during the 1960s and 1970s is already past 50 per cent.

In 1979/80, the projection was that 34 per cent of marriages would end in divorce.

Despite the gloomy outlook, however, just under 50 per cent of couples can expect to celebrate their silver wedding, and around one in nine should make it to their golden anniversary - by which time death is far more likely to intervene than divorce.

The numbers - which Mr Haskey was keen to underline were not a formal projection but an extrapolation based on a set of assumptions - are published in today's issue of *Population Trends*.

The figures suggest, howev-

er, that changes to the divorce law will make little difference to the trend.

Liberalisation of the law in 1971 and 1984 produced upward blips in divorces as couples previously unable to divorce, or suddenly able to divorce earlier, took advantage of the changes. But divorce rates had been rising sharply before both changes, neither of which had a lasting impact on the trend.

Mr Haskey said his personal view was that the current proposals would not alter the upward trend.

"Some couples will try to beat the deadline," he said, seeking a quick fault-based divorce be-

fore the delaying mechanism in the current proposals takes effect. That surge was likely to be followed by a fall as the legislation delayed the divorce of some couples. But there was nothing to suggest that the historic pattern would not reassert itself. "I suspect it is unlikely to affect the trend," he said.

Given that the risk of divorce is higher in the earlier years, however, the average recent marriage can still expect to last 26 years.

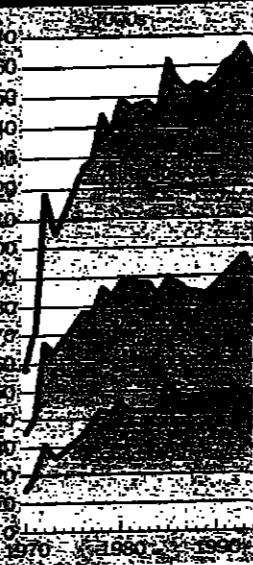
Couples who are still married after 10, 20, 30 and 40 years can on average expect to remain so for a further 24, 20, 15 and 10 years - avoiding not only the

courts, the lawyers and mediation, but also the grim reaper.

■ Labour will open a new front of attack on the Government's divorce reform plans in an attempt to make the controversial Family Law Bill more "friendly" to vulnerable partners. But most Labour MPs are expected to be broadly supportive of the measure's fundamental aim of "no-fault" divorce after a year's cooling-off period.

The Government still faces embarrassment, however, from its own MPs during Monday's Second Reading, and the free or "conscience" votes at the Committee Stage.

Rise in divorces



IN BRIEF

School closed as 120 are taken ill

A school closed yesterday because more than 120 pupils and teachers have fallen ill. Teachers at Commanhay Infants School, in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, fear the children have passed on a viral infection. Eight staff have also fallen ill, over the past week, including the head teacher Brenda Smith.

Cleaners are disinfecting the school buildings, which will remain closed until Thursday morning. The illness, which has not been identified, but which causes headaches, sore throats and high temperatures, had infected 100 pupils by Friday last week. A further 20 were taken ill at the weekend.

Docks injunction bid

Mersey docks management is seeking an injunction in the United States to prevent "solidarity action" blocking the port of Liverpool. The company has called on the US National Labor Relations Board, which has the powers of a court, to stop 329 sacked Mersey port workers enlisting the help of American dockers in their fight for reinstatement by calling for a boycott of ships bound for Liverpool.

Bus pass court fight

A pensioner yesterday accused the Government of breaking EU rules by not allowing him a free bus pass until the age of 65. Women get the pass at 60, lawyers for Stanley Atkins, of Telford, Shropshire, told the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. This discrimination, it is alleged, breaches a 1979 European directive which provides for equal treatment between the sexes in matters of social security.

Mr Atkins will win his case if judges decide the bus pass is a social security benefit, not a consequence of the UK's different retirement age.

£82,000 Constables

Two views of London by John Constable, which have never been on public view, fetched a total of £82,000 at auction - nearly three and a half times their upper estimate. The two pencil drawings - one of a windmill at Barnes in 1818, the other of the Thames waterfront and the "new" Waterloo Bridge in 1817 - remained in the family until the sale at Phillips in London. Both were bought by an anonymous collector.

Baby for girl, 12

A 12-year-old schoolgirl has given birth to a baby boy, it was revealed yesterday. The unnamed mother, from West Glamorgan, refused to have an abortion and opted instead to carry the child to full term. Both were "doing well".

III-treatment charges

A woman has been charged with two counts of allegedly abusing people with learning difficulties at two residential homes. Lorraine Field, a former worker at the homes, has been summoned to appear on bail before Beaconsfield Magistrates on 7 May, on two charges of ill-treatment of residents at the homes under the Mental Health Act.

Detective jailed

A detective was sent to prison for nine months yesterday after he admitted stealing nearly £3,000 from police station safes. Detective Sergeant Dale Hooper, who resigned from Kent County Constabulary following an internal investigation, pleaded guilty at Maidstone Crown Court to four charges of taking the cash from Gillingham and Sittingbourne police stations between May 1993 and September 1995. He asked for 22 other offences to be considered.

Scratchcard slump

Sales in National Lottery scratchcards since their launch a year ago have slumped from a peak weekly earnings figure of £44.4 million to an average of £20 million.

Campaigner quits

Prominent penal reform campaigner Vivien Stern, 54, is to step down as Director of the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders after 19 years in the job.

fish butt

Clubhouse class

Woman wins d over sa

Genetics save footballer's damaged knee

Labour to woo small firms with debt pledge

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Labour is to target the traditional Tory stronghold of the small business with a proposal to legislate for a statutory right to payment of interest on overdue debts.

The policy is expected to be unveiled at a small business conference in the City of London today organised by the Labour-backed Industry Forum, where Tony Blair is to make the keynote speech.

Ten days ago, the Prime Minister backed away from legislation on late payment and Labour's move appears designed to trump the caution of John Major's Government.

There has been an outcry over the squeeze put on small companies by the failure of both private industry and government departments to pay up on time.

Labour is thought likely to set a minimum threshold based either on the size of the unpaid debt or of the company that is failing to pay up, to exclude from penalties smaller companies that get behind on payment.

Some small business pressure groups believe that a right to interest on late debts could cause more problems than it solves, and a threshold is thought likely to allow some of these fears.

Mr Major's toughest proposal last week was for a round of consultation on whether to publish companies' late payment records in annual reports.

Tessas Tory hope for £2bn 'feelgood' boom

A £2bn spending boom financed by maturing Tessa is part of the Government's strategy for reviving the "feelgood factor", to be thrashed out today by the Cabinet, writes Colin Brown.

The special meeting of the Cabinet, called by John Major to discuss the Tory plans for a spring offensive, will be told the Treasury expects about 10 per cent of the total Tessa bonanza of £20bn to be spent in the economy, raising the chance of rekindling the "feelgood factor" for the Government.

The Treasury has estimated that 2.5 million Tessa accounts, yielding £15bn, will mature in the first quarter of this year, with a further £5bn to follow by the end of 1996.

Beaches fly the flag for Britain's seaside



Sandsbank beach at Poole, Dorset - one of 203 British beaches given Seaside Award Flags by the Tidy Britain Group yesterday. The flag is awarded on the basis of a beach's level of hygiene, safety, access for the disabled, dog control and first-aid provision. Photograph: Marc Hill

MPs told of lesbian Wren's rape ordeal

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Defence Correspondent

A former Wren yesterday told how she was afraid to report she had been raped because her assailant threatened to reveal she was a lesbian and thus ensure her discharge from the Navy. Karen Greig, a Navy engineer, was one of a number of former service personnel giving evidence to MPs looking at the forces' ban on homosexuals.

She was first raped in 1987 and her attacker then blackmailed her. She got transferred but he tracked her down and raped her again. "I felt I could not go to the authorities. I felt I would be the one to be kicked out," she told the committee. In 1988 she confided in a senior officer. At first he was supportive but later said: "I think you are not coping with this rape because you are a lesbian."

Next day the Navy's Special Investigation Branch arrived. Ms Greig was detained and examined by a psychiatrist but her ordeal was only beginning. While that was taking place, her father visited the base unexpectedly. He was told she had been raped and suffered a breakdown. That made it even more difficult to cope. Ms Greig said, and she was discharged in February 1989, after which she spent four months in a psychiatric hospital

in Aberdeen. "I can now say I am clearly on the road to recovery," she said. What they did and how they treated me was horrendous."

John Reid (Lab, Motherwell), said he was appalled by her story, one of several which highlighted difficulties faced by homosexuals in the forces. Although homo-equality ceased to be a criminal offence under military law in 1991, lesbians and gay men still face dismissal for homosexual orientation as well as homosexual conduct.

The lack of confidential counselling for anyone "coming out" was a big problem, the MPs heard. Medical officers had to respect anyone who showed any indication of homosexuality.

Only chaplains, who served under different conditions could

maintain confidentiality, although some did not, according to the Rev Niall Johnston, a former army chaplain dismissed from the forces.

He said he knew that a number of chaplains had been pressed by commanding officers to divulge confidential information, although Army rules say "the obligation to respect a confidence does not change when a clergyman holds a commission as a chaplain in the Army, for in this area a chaplain remains subject to ecclesiastical jurisdiction".

Medical officers, on the other hand, are responsible for the fighting efficiency of a unit, hold military rank and are not subject to the same rules of confidentiality as civilian doctors.

Robert Hayward, a statistician with the Stonewall gay rights group, said the recent MoD report on changing the rules on homosexuality in the armed forces was biased, not done correctly and statistically invalid. Stonewall said it merely attempted to justify the status quo, under which homosexuals are automatically discharged from the forces.

The MPs were also told the MoD was wrong to say the forces were overwhelmingly against lifting the ban on homosexuals, although there was still "significant prejudice" against them in the forces.

The cathedral was also the venue for the funeral of Megan Turner. At least 500 mourners attended the service at which

Motorists step out in sympathy for Dunblane

Motorists in Dunblane stepped out of their cars in a spontaneous gesture of sympathy and respect as the funeral of one of the infant victims of Thomas Hamilton wound its way through the town.

The gesture came after the funeral of five-year-old David Kerr, at the town's Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Family.

After the service, police halted traffic for the cortège to set out on its way to the cemetery. David's was the first of five funerals being held yesterday; the task of burying all 17 victims of the schoolroom massacre will not be completed until tomorrow.

A joint funeral service was held later at Dunblane Cathedral for Melissa Currie and Charlotte Dunn. Melissa's family moved only recently to the town. Charlotte moved to Scotland with her family only six months ago from the West Midlands, and was enjoying school life with her new teacher Gwenne Mayor - who was to become another victim of the gunman.

The cathedral was also the venue for the funeral of Megan Turner. At least 500 mourners attended the service at which

hymns included *All Things Bright and Beautiful*.

The funeral of Sophie North, from Bridgend, Dunblane, was held in private and no details were released.

The final funeral yesterday

was that of Hannah Scott, again at the cathedral. About 300 mourners attended. When the service ended, the white coffin was carried out by four pall bearers, followed only by a funeral director carrying a large arrangement of yellow flowers.

The family came out of the cathedral shortly afterwards and got into waiting cars.

Even as the bodies were being buried the body of Thomas Hamilton was "authorised" for release to his relatives.

The Crown Office in Edinburgh confirmed that the procurator fiscal's office in Stirling had authorised the release of the body.

However, whether or not Hamilton's relatives, either his surviving mother, father or grandfather, had accepted the body was not confirmed by the offices of the Crown, the fiscal, the district authority or the police.

It is understood that Hamilton's body, regardless of who had custody, will remain in police "custody" for at least a further few weeks.

Vet banned from keeping dogs in horror farm case

The dogs will now be found new homes by the RSPCA.

Hein, a former research vet for the Ministry of Agriculture, had originally denied 19 charges, brought by the RSPCA, of causing unnecessary suffering to the dogs. Yesterday she admitted eight charges of causing unnecessary suffering and another charge of breeding and selling dogs without a licence.

RSPCA inspectors brought the charges after visiting her home six times in 1994 and last year. Alan Kurtz, for the prosecution, said every room was covered in excrement and filth and was over-run by scores of dogs which had gone wild.

"They were living in deplorable conditions, wholly unsuitable, unsanitary, squalid, deep in ex-

crement and urine and other residue," he said. "The fact the defendant is a qualified vet only makes the matter worse."

The court watched videos

filmed at the house and in one shocking scene dogs were shown lapping at condensation on windows because they had no water to drink.

Dominic Webber, for the defence, said Hein had not been deliberately cruel. "Her problems were caused by over-population . . . Every minute of every hour of every day was devoted to trying to keep those dogs in the best possible condition but it was not humanely possible."

Hein, who was also fined £250 with £250 costs, plans to appeal against her sentence.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

Austria . . . \$600. France . . . £600

Belgium . . . £900 Italy . . . £4,500

Canada . . . £6,000 Mexico . . . £6,000

Cyprus . . . £12,000 Malta . . . £3,000

Denmark . . . £12,000 Norway . . . £6,000

Iran Rep . . . £15 Portugal . . . £6,250

France . . . £14,500 Spain . . . £6,000

Germany . . . £14,500 Sweden . . . £6,200

Greece . . . £16,500 Switzerland . . . \$4,000

Luxembourg . . . £150 USA . . . \$2,

news

Irish butt of English racism for more than eight centuries



JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Anti-Irish racism is as old as the 12th century; it is not the result of IRA terrorism, says a study published yesterday.

Even Irish jokes go back at least to the 16th century and chroniclers as long ago as 1187 were attacking the Irish for their filth and ignorance.

Dr Mary Hickman, director of the Irish Studies Centre at the University of North London, says in her book, *Religion, Class and Identity*, that since the Anglo-Norman invasion in the 12th century the English have tried to justify their attacks on the

Ireland by racism. She said yesterday: "Many people assume that current English hostility or discrimination towards the Irish is the result of the events in Northern Ireland so they see it as regrettable but understandable."

Dr Hickman, who is conducting a nationwide study of discrimination against the Irish for the Equal Opportunities Commission, argues that Ireland is important to the security of England and successive generations have tried to justify invasion and colonisation by stereotyping the Irish as wild and uncivilised.

The Pope sanctioned the Anglo-Norman invasion on the

Words from the history of a nation's prejudice

12th century: "A most filthy race... a race more ignorant than all other nations of the true principles of the faith..."

They pay neither tithes nor first fruits; they do not contract marriage; nor shun incestuous connections" - Giraldus Cambrensis

18th century: The Irish are "taught in the most profound barbarism and ignorance" - David Hume.

1838: Irish immigration into Britain "is an example of a less civilised population spreading itself as a subaltern beneath a more civilised community" - parliamentary inquiry into the Irish in Britain.

1930s: "They (the Irish) have settled into the closest poor quarter and turned the settlement into a slum" - J. B. Priestley.

1950s: "No Irish need apply" - lodger house notice.

of the Irish as "stupid" became common. "Most of this was designed to show how English rule could be used to benefit the Irish," says Dr Hickman.

An anonymous contemporary of Shakespeare included a very ignorant and wild Irishman in the play *Sir John Oldcastle*, based partly, scholars think on MacMorris in *Henry V*.

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the stereotype changed; the half-human savage became a figure of contempt. In the 19th century more details of the stereotype, such as idleness and drinking, were filled in.

English attitudes to the Irish are closely connected to anti-

Catholicism. Dr Hickman's book points out that a separate system of Roman Catholic schools grew up because of the hostility of English working class parents to having their children educated alongside Irish children. It was not the case that the Catholics insisted on their own schools.

A spokesman for the Commission of Racial Equality said they had commissioned their study because there was mounting concern about discrimination against those of Irish origin in the workplace and at schools.

■ *Religion, Class and Identity*: Mary J. Hickman; Averbry: £37.50.

Clubhouse clash: Champion lost job unfairly after fracas, but sex discrimination case fails

Woman golfer wins dispute over sacking

A champion woman golfer celebrated victory yesterday after winning her case for unfair dismissal against owners of a golf club following a fracas in which she punched a business man.

Philomena Vaughan, 42, struck John Price, 49, causing him to fall off his stool, after claiming that he stroked her thigh during a prize-giving ceremony at the Dewstow golf club in Caerwent, Gwent.

Details of Mrs Vaughan's punch spread like wildfire around the club, earning her the nickname of "Mohammed Ali" and "Rocky", an industrial tribunal in Cardiff heard yesterday.

After the incident, Mrs Vaughan, who has four children and has won the club championship three times, was suspended from her job as manager of the club shop.

Two months later she was sacked after claims that she called the ladies' captain "an old bitch" and officials "a load of old sods".

Yesterday the tribunal unanimously agreed that Mrs Vaughan was unfairly dismissed. But the panel rejected her second complaint of sex discrimination.

Clive Lewis, representing Mrs Vaughan, said the club, which charges fees of £450 a year, had not suspended her fellow member, Mr Price, who was alleged to have stroked Mrs Vaughan's thigh as she walked past him after receiving her awards at a crowded presenta-



Philomena Vaughan: Dubbed 'Rocky' after incident in bar

dismissing her allegation." Miss Harris added that Mrs Vaughan then reacted by twice poking Mr Price in the shoulder, after which he "looked like he lost his balance".

Mr Lewis had claimed the club failed to suspend Mr Price pending the result of an investigation.

After the decision Mrs Vaughan, a Welsh gold medal winner and a county player, said she was delighted to have won.

"Everyone has to stand up for their rights," she added.

"It was quite difficult to take this action before the tribunal but I would do the same again. Everyone has got to stand up for their rights; it's very important."

Mrs Vaughan said she considered she had won the case despite the technicalities of the panel dismissing sex discrimination.

Geoffrey Davies, the panel's chairman, said that after hearing details of Mrs Vaughan's £9,000-a-year job and her fringe benefits including clothing and golf clubs, compensation for the unfair dismissal would be agreed at a later date. However, the panel was ordering a reduction of 25 per cent because of their view that Mrs Vaughan had contributed to her own dismissal.

Mrs Vaughan was backed by the Equal Opportunities Commission in her case.

Management of the Dewstow golf club have not so far commented on the decision.

An endagered species of snail is being brought back from the brink of extinction by feeding them on porridge.

Professor Bryan Clarke, of Nottingham University, has been studying the Partula snails to the African species that they were meant to devour.

Before it was too late, Professor Clarke rescued some of the snails and took them back to the university, where they have found to thrive on a mixture of porridge, ground grass, trout pellets and chalk.

Five of the seven species that were rescued have been

about the Celts as a "race" or the Irish as a nation.

The emphasis prior to the

16th century was on the pa-

ganism, superstition and bar-

barism of the Irish. Before then, Dr Hickman says, the

caricature concentrated on their

wildness and savagery.

From the reign of Elizabeth I, the English began systematical-

ly to colonise Ireland and the

stereotype became more de-

tailed; in particular the notion

of the Irish as "stupid" became common. "Most of this was designed to show how English rule could be used to benefit the Irish," says Dr Hickman.

An anonymous conte-

mporary of Shakespeare included a

very ignorant and wild Irishman in the play *Sir John Oldcastle*, based partly, scholars think on MacMorris in *Henry V*.

During the 16th and 17th

centuries, the stereotype changed; the half-human savage

became a figure of contempt.

In the 19th century more details of the stereotype, such as idleness

and drinking, were filled in.

English attitudes to the Irish

are closely connected to anti-

safe haven: A Partula snail at Nottingham University, where the Pacific Island species has been saved from extinction

Photograph: Stuart Harrison

Porridge diet brings snails back from brink

An endagered species of snail is being brought back from the brink of extinction by feeding them on porridge.

Professor Bryan Clarke, of Nottingham University, has been studying the Partula snails to the African species that they were meant to devour.

They were threatened with extinction after carnivorous snails were introduced to their natural Pacific island habitat in an attempt to kill off a colony of giant African snails that had escaped into the wild from the farm where they were being

bred for the restaurant trade. The plan went wrong, however, as the carnivore variety much preferred the indigenous Partula snails to the African species that they were meant to devour.

Professor Clarke rescued some of the snails and took them back to the university, where they have found to thrive on a mixture of porridge, ground grass, trout pellets and chalk.

The tiny snails are fed twice

a week with the porridge mix,

and their numbers have now

swelled to around 3,000.

Professor Clarke's assistant at the university, Vivien Frame, said: "They are really quite

successfully bred and specimens have been sent from Nottingham to zoos around the world.

Professor Clarke said: "They are breeding nicely now. Their natural diet is dead leaves. Porridge is made of oats, and oats are dead leaves."

Some of the Partula snails are now being re-introduced to the Pacific island of Moorea.

An electric fence connected to a car battery has been put round their enclosure to stop the carnivorous snails, called *Englandina*, from getting to them.

Professor Clarke said: "Once gone, the snails will be lost forever."

"We see no hope of stopping the spread of *Englandina* on the islands where it has already become established."

"But there is a very good case for discouraging new introductions."

"Our work has been successful in that it has shown that generations of snail which have been bred in the laboratory can be returned to their natural habitat."

Genetics saves footballer's damaged knee

LIZ HUNT
Health Editor

A young footballer whose career is threatened by a knee injury, is to become the first person in Britain to undergo surgery to repair the joint using some of his own cartilage, the material which lines the joint and ensures its smooth functioning, which has been "grown" in a test-tube using genetic engineering techniques.

Jamie Shore, 18, a former England under-16 star and now with Norwich City, took out a £10,000 loan to part-fund the pioneering operation which he hopes will save his career.

Doctors say that the new technique offers hope to scores of professional and non-professional sportsmen and women whose playing days are halted by similar injuries, and to people suffering from painful arthritic joints.

Some of the damaged cartilage in Mr Shore's knee was removed in January and flown to America where it was cultured in a special medium to grow from an original sample size of about 10,000 cells to around 10-16 million cells.

The new cells will be implanted into the knee to recreate the joint's lining during the operation on 29 March at the NHS Centre for Sports Injury Surgery at Crewe in Cheshire.

Dai Rees, director of the Centre and a consultant orthopaedic surgeon at the Mid-Cheshire Hospitals NHS Trust, who will carry out the operation, yesterday likened it to a "pot-hole" repair.



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news

Care inquiry: Death as charges brought over alleged assaults

Manager in homes scandal found dead

JASON BENNETT
Crime Correspondent

The former manager of two private homes in which mentally handicapped residents were allegedly sexually and physically abused has been found dead shortly after being told he was going to face charges of ill-treatment.

Gordon Rowe, who set up and ran the homes in Stoke Poges, near Slough, Buckinghamshire, for 10 years until 1993, is believed to have taken his own life. His body was found in a car in Crowthorne, Berkshire, early on Monday morning. A tube had been fitted from the exhaust pipe into the vehicle.

Mr Rowe was at the centre of an 18-month police investigation, in which 700 people were interviewed following allegations, first reported in the *Independent*, that mentally handicapped adults were raped, beaten and humiliated.

It is understood that a few days ago Mr Rowe learnt that he was about to be charged for ill-treatment of residents under the Mental Health Act. Mr Rowe has had a total of 40 allegations of assault levelled at him by 13 people.

The police have been investigating about a dozen people who worked at the homes, run by the company, Longcare, while Mr Rowe was in charge. Several people are expected to be charged in the next few weeks. The families of at least four former residents are trying to sue for damages for the severe traumatic stress they



Gordon Rowe (above) photographed while in hiding after the *Independent* first reported alleged abuses at private homes he ran in Buckinghamshire



'Abuse and torment' at care homes

claimed to have suffered from their alleged abuse at the homes up to 1993.

A confidential report by Buckinghamshire County Council, which was leaked to the *Independent* in 1994, contained allegations which, if substantiated, would amount to one of the worst residential care scandals since systematic child sex abuse was discovered in Leicestershire homes in 1991. It alleged that men and

women at the homes were raped, forced to eat outside and locked in their rooms – sometimes for days at a time.

The document, compiled by the council's social services inspection unit, reported that one man suffered severe and bleeding for days before he was taken to a doctor. The inspectors' report, which was passed to the police, concluded that residents were "continually subjected to a catalogue of abuse, deprivation, humiliation and torment".

Among further allegations made against Gordon Rowe were that in 1992 staff saw him kick a young man, who had the mental age of a child, in the stomach; force-feed a 47-year-old woman suffering from Down's syndrome; and hose down with freezing water in mid-winter a 39-year-old man who had incontinence.

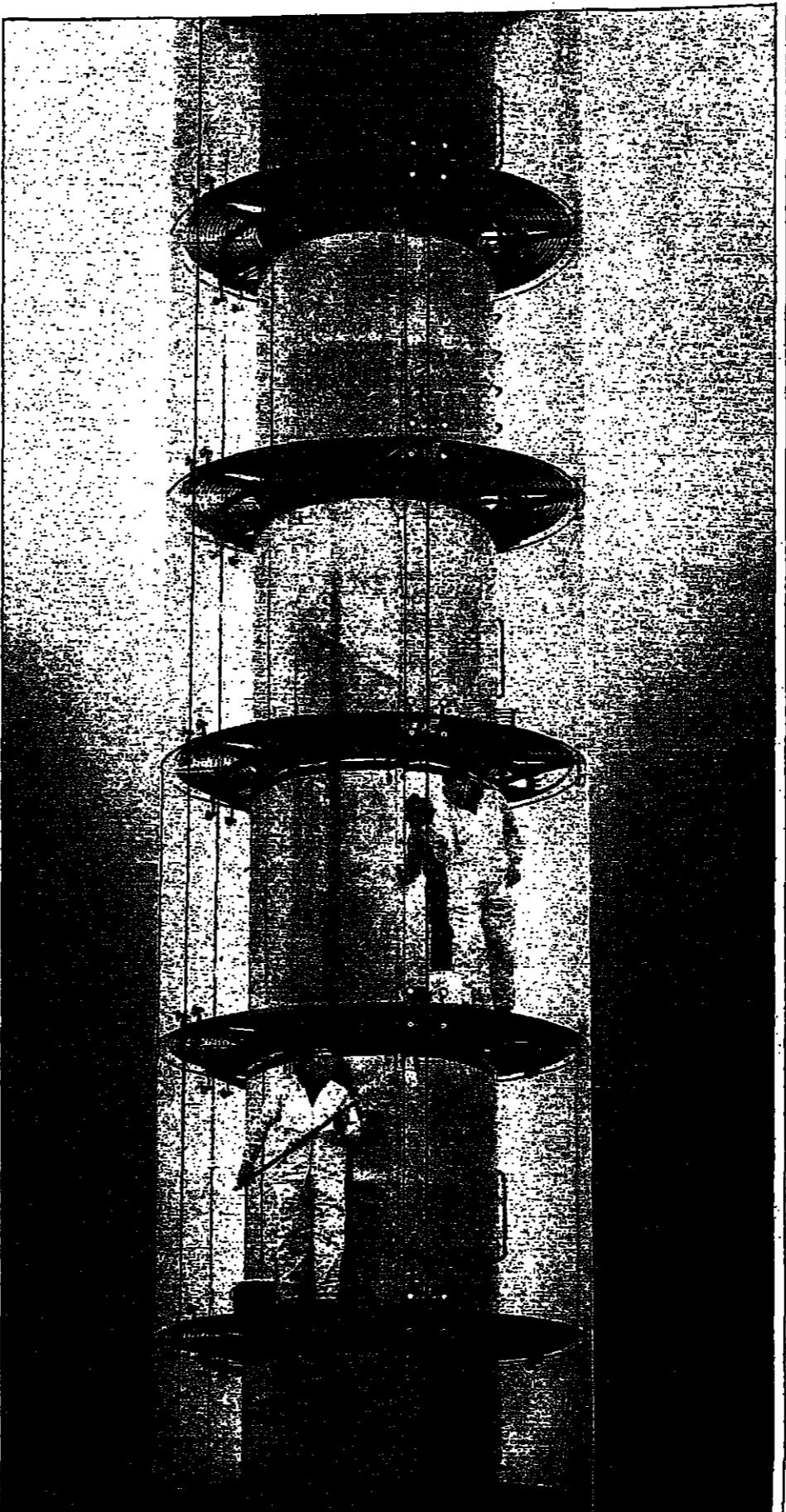
Buckinghamshire County Council's report on the allegations was completed in June 1994 but the council's social services department kept its findings confidential.

They agreed to let the homes remain open, providing that Mr Rowe severed all ties with them. It added that the present management has made improvements.

The two homes, Stoke Place and Stoke Green, are now run by Mr Rowe's son, Nigel, who was unavailable for comment yesterday.

Detective Superintendent Jon Bound, who led the investigation, said yesterday: "More than 12 people were investigated during the inquiry. I anticipate in the next few weeks we will be taking action as a result of the wide-ranging allegations of sexual and physical abuse and ill-treatment."

A spokesman from Buckinghamshire council, said that the police investigation resulted from information obtained by the council's social services department. He added that the council had acted in the best interests of the home's residents at all times.



Spring clean: Workers beginning the clean-up yesterday of Thames Water's tower on the roundabout at the Holland Park Avenue/M41 junction in west London. The tower, winner of a design competition in 1993, hides a steel pipe and acts as a barometer. Its blue liquid rising and falling according to air pressure. Photograph: Edward Sykes

Court told of paedophile's reign of terror

Sixteen boys went through a nightmare of abuse, trapped in a children's home run by a paedophile, a court heard yesterday. The boys, aged from six to 16, were under the total control of Peter Harley, whose reign of terror lasted five years. Some armed weeping after being torn from their mothers



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Widowed Separated

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9. Which of the three pictures do you prefer? (tick the box)

1. 2. 3.

Sacked woman 'feared sexist boss'

A woman supervisor told an industrial tribunal she was sacked after she complained that her boss had told her of his sexual fantasies about a colleague.

Cathy Thomas, of Rustington, West Sussex, claimed production manager Philip Hooper said women were only good for one thing and should "go home and do the ironing".

Miss Thomas, 25, was dismissed last September from polystyrene manufacturers Styropack, in Littlehampton. Bosses at the factory claimed she was too stressed to cope with her job as deputy team leader and tried to cut her pay. She was sacked when she refused to agree to the new conditions of employment.

Miss Thomas told an industrial tribunal in Southampton that Mr Hooper was often sexist, abusive and intimidating.

She said the manager, who suffered from irritable bowel syndrome, went into graphic detail about an exploratory operation on his bowels. She said: "His attitude was sexist and abusive almost immediately.

"He would insist I make coffee and say things like 'women belong at home' and 'you should stay at home with the bloody ironing'. He would often use his physical presence to intimidate me."

She added: "One of the fantasies he told me about concerned a female colleague. He said he imagined having sex with her over a pool table."

Miss Thomas said she complained to her team leader who spoke to Mr Hooper. In September last year Miss Thomas was signed off sick for two weeks and returned to find she had been demoted. "I was told I was unable to cope with the job because of stress," she said. "When I refused to accept a cut in wages I was dismissed."

Miss Thomas claims breach of contract and sexual discrimination. The firm admits the breach but denies discrimination. Colin Bast, a team-leader at Styropack, told the tribunal he had never heard Mr Hooper make any sexist remarks.

The tribunal was adjourned.



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Culture clash: Performing artists up in arms over Government proposal to remove financial safety net for the out-of-work

Actress takes centre stage in battle over cash for 'resting'

MARIANNE MACDONALD
Arts Correspondent

Charlotte Cornwell, one of the few members of the acting profession who manages to get a fair amount of well-paid work, is spearheading a campaign against government proposals to treat actors as self-employed.

During the four and a half months she was out of work last year, she signed on the dole. "It's a matter of principle," she says. "If we made the contributions we should take it up."

Ms Cornwell, 46, who is as famous for suing a critic who alleged she had a large bottom as for her parts in *Dressing For Breakfast* and *Rock Follies*, is furious about plans to change her tax status. Actors, dancers and singers pay higher Class 1 National Insurance contributions which entitle them to an unemployment benefit of £46.45 a

week, sick pay, maternity pay, and industrial injuries benefit.

But the Department of Social Security proposes to change their National Insurance status to Class 2. This would mean they are only able to get income support, which is means-tested.

Ms Cornwell says the move could be devastating. "This goes to the heart of the whole question of how we value the cultural contribution of performing artists. Without being able to sign on, life would become really terrible."

This is the story of a year in her life:

January and February 1995
A View From The Bridge at Bristol Old Vic, on £260 a week plus expenses of £52.50. Luckily, she can stay with friends.

"I'm lucky I didn't have to pay for digs, because they are at

least £60 a week for a room in a house," she says. But her earnings do not go very far after her agent deducts 10 per cent and she puts aside one-third for tax and child care for her daughter, March.

Play moves to Birmingham Rep, on a half-subsidised basis.

Play moves to Birmingham Rep, on a half-subsidised basis. And her earnings rise steeply. She is now on West End rates of £925 a week. Once again, she has a friend she can stay with.

April, May, June

Play opens at the Strand Theatre in the West End, still on £925 a week. She can now live at home with her daughter and that saves on child care.

"I'm on good money," she says, "but the West End minimum is only £241.51."

Mid-June, July, August

The work has dried up, and with little money coming in, it is easy for the overdraft to build up again. "The thing that happens

to actors is they keep money back for tax but then they come to the point of having no money for food and their children and they dip into it."

September, October

Lands a main part in a new television sitcom, *Dressing For Breakfast*. Spends two weeks on location around London, then six weeks in rehearsal before filming on Friday nights at the South Bank. She is earning more than £1,000 a week – an actor's dream.

November, December

Signing on again, but it has been a good year. "It's the first time ever where I've been in the luxurious position of being able to turn down work," she says. "In my 30s and 40s, although I got prestigious jobs in the theatre, I was out of work a lot. Only this year, have I managed to pay off all the debts that accumulated from those 15 years."



Dramatic appeal: 'Without being able to sign on, life would be really terrible,' Charlotte Cornwell says. Photograph: Edward Sykes

West is refused leave to appeal

WILL BENNETT

The serial killer Rosemary West looks certain to spend the rest of her life behind bars after the Court of Appeal yesterday refused to grant her leave to appeal against her convictions.

The rejection of her case by Lord Taylor, the Lord Chief Justice, and two other judges leaves West, 42, with no further legal avenues to take unless new evidence about the Cromwell Street killings comes to light.

When West was convicted of 10 murders by a jury at Winchester Crown Court last November, Mr Justice Mantell, the trial judge, said he would recommend that she should never be released from prison.

After yesterday's hearing in London Leo Gailey, West's solicitor, said that the chances of her appeal being successful had always been "a long shot" and that she had not been optimistic. He said when he spoke to West recently, "she said to me 'well they're hardly likely to hand the key over are they?' and I agreed that that would be unlikely to happen quickly... She, I think, is a realist."

West, widow of the self-confessed serial killer Frederick West who was found hanged in his prison cell before he faced trial, remained in Durham jail during the two-day hearing.

She has always denied involvement in the murders of 10 girls and young women whose remains were found at the Wests' house at 25 Cromwell Street, Gloucester, and at their previous home in the city. She alleged that her husband had

carried out the killings alone.

The victims included Heather West, Rosemary's daughter Charnaine West, her husband's step-daughter, and Shirley Robinson, a lodger who was pregnant by Fred West. The seven other victims were bound gagged and kept alive in the cellar at 25 Cromwell Street while they were sexually abused.

On the first day of the appeal, Richard Ferguson QC, West's counsel, told the court that there was no direct evidence against her, that key evidence should have been declared inadmissible, that the trial judge had failed to sum up adequately and that media coverage had prejudiced the trial.

Yesterday Brian Leveson QC, for the Crown, said: "In a nutshell, it is our submission that Mrs West was tried fair and square. The evidence called by the Crown was properly laid before the jury."

The summing up we submit was meticulous in attention to detail and the case was left to the jury on a correct and proper basis. We submit that the jury understood the issues and on ample evidence convicted her on each of the 10 counts."

Lord Taylor, Mr Justice Mitchell and Mr Justice Newmar will give their reasons for the decision next week.

Detective Superintendent John Bennett, who led the murder inquiry, said afterwards: "We are very pleased that the judicial process has come to an end and perhaps now the families of the victims can be allowed to live their lives and put all these tragic problems behind them."

Musical postponed

The theatre impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh yesterday announced the postponement of his latest West End musical, *Martin Guerre*, writes John McKie.

Sir Cameron has decided that the £3.5m show, scheduled to start previews on 1 June, will not now commence until 21 June, because of choreographic difficulties. The world première

will now be on 10 July instead of 18 June.

Sir Cameron was said to want a four-week workshop prior to the rehearsals to develop the choreography.

Around 6,000 people who had booked tickets for the show at London's Prince Edward Theatre between 1-20 June were yesterday sent alternative booking arrangements.

DAILY POEM

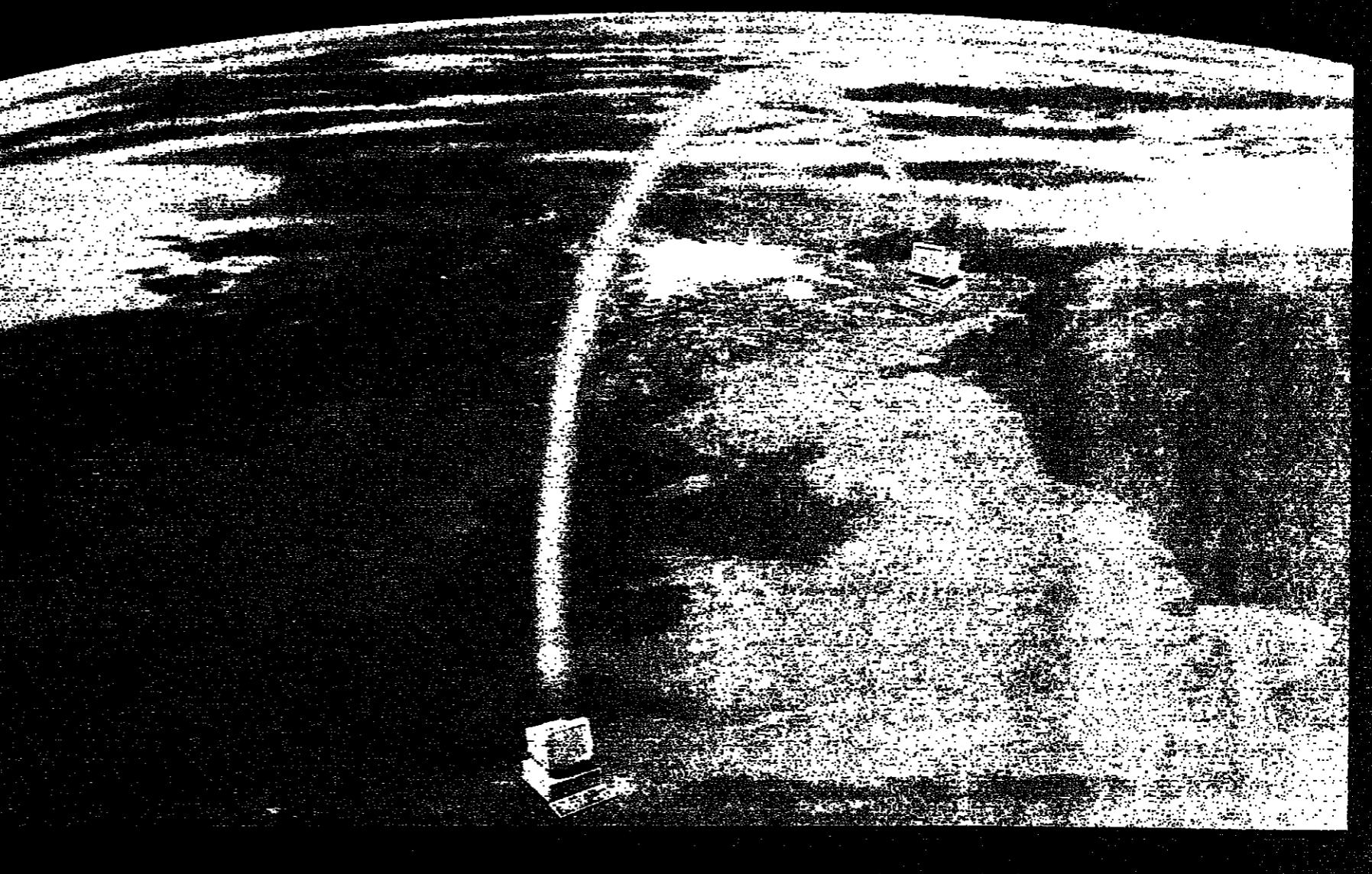
Memento

By Edwin Morgan

over the cliff-top and into the mist
across the heather and down to the peat
here with the sheep and where with the pheasant
through the snibbles and past the pheasant's byss
above the pines and past the northern lights
along the way and out to meet the ice
among the stacks and round their kreidekreis
in summer lightning and beneath white nights
behind the haars and in front of the tower
beyond the moor and against witt and ring
below the mort-gate and outwith all kind
under the hill and at the bokless bower
over the hills and far away to bring
over the hills and far way to mind

Edwin Morgan was born in Glasgow in 1920 and, having attended Glasgow University as an undergraduate, became a lecturer in the English in 1947, finally retiring as titular professor in 1980. This poem first appeared in *Sonnets from Scotland* (Marischal Press, 1984) and now appears in *Collected Poems*, published by Carcanet last month at £14.95.

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Hume praises the courage of Britain's poor

ANDREW BROWN
Religious Affairs
Correspondent

Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, yesterday called a former teenage prostitute "his sister". He was speaking at a conference on poverty during which church leaders heard impassioned pleas for action from the disadvantaged.

One of them, "Lisa", was a prostitute in her teens, starting at the age of 10. "The average age of all prostitutes on streets is 14," she told the conference. "Do not see child prostitutes, but prostituted children ... used as sexual spittoons."

"Women shouldn't have to do it, not because of the morality of the issue, but because of what it does to us, its survivors."

The Cardinal replied: "She is a courageous woman. She is my sister. She is human and she has had a hard time. I would like to pay tribute to her." He added: "But whenever we talk of poverty we must never forget the spiritual poverty in all of us."

The leaders of all the main British churches, along with MPs, social workers, business people and priests, gathered in London to hear the testimo-

ny of 12 people. Moraene Roberts, from London, told the conference that she had had to put her eldest son into care to guarantee him an education, even though this had permanently damaged their relationship. Other parents, she said, had been advised to put their children on the "at-risk" register to get nursery places.

Parents in extreme poverty were shown the hugely better facilities which prospective foster parents could offer their children. "The greatest lack in my life is the lack of education; there must be a priority for the children of illiterate, badly educated and badly housed parents, so that they don't en-

ter schools disadvantaged at the age of five," Ms Roberts said.

Jamie Phillips, a 17-year-old woman in care, said that if she had stayed with her family, she would have been dead. Yet government policy encouraged people to leave care and, at 18, she would do that.

"We are suddenly thrown from full-time care into full-time neglect. We do not have the comfort of a supportive family, social services are our family," she explained. "How can we be expected to be set up for a full independent life at the age of 16 or 17 years?"

Hilary Russell, national chair of Church Action on Poverty, the charity which organised the conference, said that nearly 4 million people were living on incomes below the level of income support; and nearly 10 million lived in households which relied on income support.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, told the conference that he had been born in poverty, referring to his upbringing on a council estate.

"We must get beyond slogans," he said. "I believe in the enterprise society. I also believe in the stakeholder society. But neither will be satisfactory if people feel excluded."



Cardinal Hume: Paid tribute

Prostitute's sermon to the archbishop



Beyond slogans: The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey, talks to 'Lisa', a prostitute. Photograph: Dillon Bryden

Twelve people told the conference about their experience of poverty. Here are two of them.

■ "Lisa", a prostitute

Lisa went on the streets at the age of 10 after being abused within her family. "Two-thirds of prostitutes have been abused as children. Prostitution is not about sexuality or fulfilling sexual fantasies - it is about abuse. It is about poverty. It is not about choice. It is awful, dangerous, and life-threatening. Seventy three per cent of prostitutes have been raped repeatedly and beaten."

"Take a good look at me. Next time you see a prostitute at work, you do not see a whore, you see a survivor. You see a woman trying to feed herself and her children."

"You think 'I couldn't be my daughter, she's at university.' But poverty and prostitution among students are at an all-time high. You think, it couldn't be my mother: 89 per cent of prostitutes over 16 are mothers."

■ David Torrance, Glasgow, 45. Raised in the Gorbals, he was left with three young children by his wife, a diagnosed schizophrenic. He raised them in poverty, in an isolated life. "That led me to alcohol, and then I ended up in prison."

He served four years and emerged to be evicted from his home for non-payment of arrears. He was rescued by the Simon Community which found him a place to live. This emergency accommodation cost the taxpayer £300 a week - the sum of his original rent arrears.

He could not go on to further education because a grant would render him ineligible for his housing. "People end up paying for being poor," he said.

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Teachers to sue more councils over violence

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

A teachers' union is preparing to sue four more local authorities where teachers have been victims of violent attacks by pupils after a teacher won damages of £82,500.

The National Association of Schoolmasters' Union of Women Teachers announced its plans as Hazel Spence-Young told how she was attacked and permanently disabled by a 10-year-old pupil. Mrs Spence-Young won the award, one of the largest ever made to a teacher, because Coventry City Council refused to remove from her class a boy who was so violent that psychologists said he should be in a special school.

The union said it was "virtually certain" to take similar cases to court. The cases are:

■ An assault last month on a 49-year-old Sandwell language teacher who suffered post-traumatic stress after being punched

in the face by a pupil and receiving cuts and bruises on the eye, nose and lip.

■ An attack on a 43-year-old Derbyshire teacher by a 12-year-old. She suffered a wrenched shoulder and bruised wrist and eventually had to resign.

■ An attack on a 46-year-old special needs teacher in Leeds by a 15-year-old. She was smashed to the ground, suffered a broken nose, black eyes and damaged tear ducts.

■ An attack on a 42-year-old Nottinghamshire teacher who was pushed into the wall and punched by a 15-year-old with a history of violent behaviour.

The victim was off work for three months.

Mrs Spence-Young, who taught at Frederick Bird primary school until the attack, yesterday urged other teachers to take action against violent pupils. "I hope I can stand as an example to other teachers who feel as angry and frustrated and helpless as I did dealing with a child who

shouldn't be in a mainstream classroom and being given no help to deal with him."

The council told her she would be in breach of contract if she refused to teach the boy. When the 10-year-old attacked her, she suffered injuries which mean that she needs a neck brace and is in continual pain which has to be controlled by drugs. Her right arm is partly paralysed. The attack happened after she tried to lead him back into her class. "I was being kicked and punched and punched. It was as if there were hands and feet everywhere." Her injuries meant she could not pick up her grandson.

Nigel de Gruchy, the union's general secretary, said: "The message we are sending out to negligent employers is that the union will pursue these cases. And if we can't pursue them with reason and common sense and justice, we will pursue them in the courts and hit them where it hurts, in their pockets."

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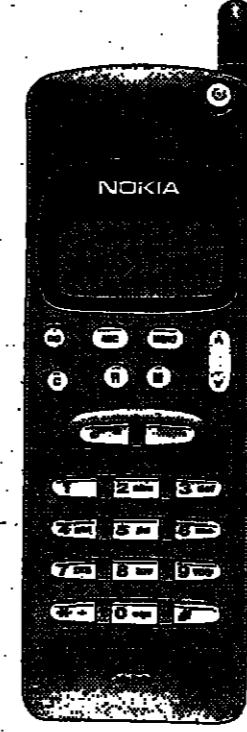
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REBELLIOUS
COUNCIL

Rebellious Baker wins concession on nursery vouchers Bill

A modest concession last night on the nursery vouchers Bill bought the Government out of trouble with one of the architects of its education reforms, Kenneth Baker.

Rebellious mutterings from the former secretary of state led to an assurance that the extra cost of providing for nursery school children with special needs would be taken into account in assessing Exchequer support for local education authorities.

As the Nursery Education and Grant-Maintained Schools Bill completed its final Commons stages, a Government amendment was added, giving

LEAs power to provide goods and services to nurseries outside the maintained sector for children with special needs.

But Mr Baker, who for the last 18 months has been raising money for the Royal London School for the Blind at Dorton House, near Sevenoaks, Kent, said it was no good granting the power without the resources.

Having earlier threatened he might vote for a Labour amendment on securing the money, Mr Baker said he hoped the minister would agree that authorities who used the new power would be reimbursed through their annual grant.

Inside Parliament

Stephen Goodwin

Education minister, Robin Squire duly obliged. He said the number of cases where LEAs assisted non-maintained schools was likely to be small but the department would ensure the consequences were reflected in the annual assessment of their needs.

Peter Kilfoyle, a Labour education spokesman, remained unpersuaded that the Government would produce the money, but the party's more rigid amendment was rejected by 278 votes to 238.

Mr Baker said there was no doubt that if children who were blind or had other serious handicaps could be helped at an early age, it reduced their sense of isolation.

"Any child who is deaf, blind or seriously physically handicapped has a sense of isolation, and to be brought into contact with other children and with teachers who give them a great

deal of attention and love is an enormous step forward beyond their family associations."

But he said it was an expensive form of provision and often "somewhat patchy".

Mr Squire continued to oppose Opposition calls for all nursery education funded through the £1,100 per child voucher system to be supervised by a qualified teacher.

The Child Support Agency is to start paying interest on late payments after complaints about delays in passing on cash to lone parents caring for children. Andrew

Mitchell, Social Security minister, told MPs at question time that the move would apply to all maintenance payments the CSA had received since 1 April 1995.

The CSA will now be paying interest on maintenance which it has collected and which is due for onward payment to the parent with care but which has not been passed on within 28 days," Mr Mitchell said.

According to the Department of Social Security there are currently 600 cases where payments have been delayed by more than 28 days. The interest accrued would amount to £10,500, an average of £17.50

per case. Payments will be made to all parents who qualify, over a minimum of £5.

The agency has a target of passing on 90 per cent of all child-maintenance payments received from absent parents within 10 days. In 1995-96 it has exceeded that target and passed on 97 per cent within 10 days.

The threat of a Government defeat over television sports coverage was averted in the Lords when Labour withdrew a bid to make broadcasters share highlights of major sporting events with other channels.

Lord Howell, former Labour sports minister, last month led a successful revolt to prevent pay television gaining exclusive live coverage over the eight so-called "crown jewels" of British sport.

But last night he surprised peers during the Broadcasting Bill's third reading debate by withdrawing his latest demand, calling instead for a statutory deal on the Sports Council to "draw up and keep under review" a code of guidance to the Independent Television Commission, the BBC and the Welsh Authority. The Bill now goes to the Commons.

UK has opt-out on race plan

KATHERINE BUTLER
Brussels

Britain signed up to a common European Union plan to combat racism yesterday, but only after negotiating the right not to criminalise certain forms of racist behaviour such as publicly denying that the Jewish Holocaust actually happened.

Michael Howard, the Home Secretary, outraged European counterparts and Jewish groups in Britain last November by rejecting the draft plan which aimed to strengthen co-operation and close loopholes arising from differences in member states' legal systems which are exploited by groups such as neo-Nazis to pursue some activities with impunity.

At yesterday's meeting in Brussels, Mr Howard agreed to go along with the joint action, which obliges member states to make it an automatic criminal offence to incite discrimination, violence or racial hatred, to condone crimes against humanity, to deny the Holocaust, to distribute racist tracts or to take part in groups which involve discrimination or racial, ethnic or religious hatred.

But he secured an annex stating that in Britain such behaviour must be shown to be "threatening, abusive or insulting and is carried out with the intention of stirring up racial hatred or is likely to do so" before it is an offence.

Mr Howard said the compromise would protect the balance between combating racism and the freedom of expression.

Britain also secured agreement from EU justice ministers yesterday on closer co-operation against football hooligans ahead of the European soccer championships in June. Participating EU countries will send police "spotters" to accompany national teams to assist in identifying potential troublemakers.

Tories face fury over 'plagueship council'

CHRIS BLACKHURST
Westminster Correspondent

The total cost to Westminster residents of the alleged gerrymandering policies of Dame Shirley Porter, the city council's former leader, and her fellow Conservatives, was put at £103m by Labour yesterday, far in excess of previous estimates.

Frank Dobson, Labour environment spokesman, demanded the money be repaid to the council tax payers of Westminster. At a curtain-raising press conference ahead of publication of the long-awaited District Auditor's final report on the council's "homes-for-votes" scandal, Mr Dobson accused the Tories of having committed "seven deadly sins" in Westminster.

Homes for votes, the selling of flats in key marginal wards, upon which John Magill, the District Auditor, is due to pronounce shortly, was, said Mr Dobson, just one of the seven. The other "sins" listed by Mr Dobson included commitment to selling 100 properties a year which resulted in flats remaining empty despite homeless families in the area; large service charges and repair bills for those who bought leasehold flats under the homes-for-votes policy; millions spent by Government on subsidies to keep Westminster's local tax bills down; and, the "most deadly sin of all" - moving families into asbestos-affected blocks.

Mr Magill's report, a follow-up to his scathing interim findings made public two years ago, is expected to recommend

the surcharging of Dame Shirley and her former colleagues, including Barry Legg, MP for Milton Keynes South West, for around £30m.

The earliest the Magill report will be published is 1 April, it emerged yesterday. In a letter to Dame Shirley's lawyers, the District Auditor rejected her request for an advance copy of his report and to be able to comment on his conclusions. Instead, he said, he will write to her tomorrow, giving 10 days' minimum notice of the publication date. His decision and reasons will be made known to those affected at least two hours before they are released to the public.

Whichever date Mr Magill chooses, his report will almost certainly cast a shadow over the forthcoming Tory local government election campaign. That, plus another report due out shortly on the moving of homeless families into asbestos-ridden flats in Paddington, will be seized upon by Labour.

Westminster used to be the Tories' flagship council, "Mr Dobson said. "These days it has become the Tories' plagueship council."

The Tories, not surprisingly, reacted angrily to Mr Dobson's claims. The present Tory leader of the council, Melvyn Caplan, said: "The hypocrisy of the Labour party is mind-blowing... they only care about their own political ends." He denied that Westminster had received preferential treatment from this government. "Westminster was actually better off financially under the last Labour government," he said.

A £9m fitness campaign launched in Docklands, east London, yesterday will urge people to walk further, use the stairs instead of lifts, and cycle rather than drive.

The Health Education Authority, which is running the three-year campaign, said the

aim was to persuade people to adapt their lives to include some exertion, without pushing themselves too strenuously.

Baroness Cumberlege, junior health minister, who described herself as a keen cyclist and gardener, said: "We do not have to be Olympic champions or pump iron to keep fit. The important thing is to do something regular if you can. Start to build up to moderate activity five times a week - you will certainly reap the benefits."

The minister, 53, said she practised what she was preaching: "I do cycle and I've done the London-to-Brighton bike run. I'm also a farmer's wife and so it's quite hard to avoid exercise when you live on a farm - especially when the bullocks get out."

Research has shown significant health improvements result from building up to five 30-minute sessions of moderate physical activity a week.

Nick Cavill, HEA's physical activity manager, said: "Five 30-minute sessions a week is a goal. Any activity is better than none, particularly if you haven't been

active for some time. So build up slowly, and think of all the ways that you could be a little more active... it's not necessary to go jogging or run around a squash court. Brisk walking, cycling, swimming and dancing are ideal."

The initiative follows concern that more than half the British population is overweight, and that one person in three is classed as sedentary. Between 1980 and 1992 the overweight population increased by 15 per cent to 54 per cent of men and 45 per cent of women. Other

developed and emerging countries show a similar trend, and the World Health Organisation last week has launched a campaign to tackle obesity.

There is growing evidence for the benefits of physical exercise which protects against heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes and arthritis. It also has valuable aid to stress relief.

The Active For Life campaign will be promoted on television initially, and by posters in libraries, community centres and doctors' surgeries.

Call to shelve nuclear plan

MARY FAGAN
and TOM WILKIE

Labour called yesterday for the planned £2.6bn privatisation of the nuclear industry to be shelved following problems with the refuelling process and a subsequent shutdown at one of the most modern reactors, Heysham 2, in Lancashire.

A technical investigation has begun at Heysham and at Torness, an identical station, to establish whether there is a fundamental design fault.

John Battle, shadow energy spokesman, said: "The sale of nuclear does not add up economically and there now also seems to be a question over structural faults."

Mr Battle called for a halt to the privatisation process until the Nuclear Installations Inspectorate was able to give assurances there is no threat to public safety. The sale, scheduled to take place this summer, is already dogged by arguments over the financial structure of the industry between the Government and British Energy, the company to be privatised.

British Energy said the problem "really is a minor one" and the decision to shut Heysham 2 was taken voluntarily with no pressure from the NII.

The problem at Heysham 2 occurred as fuel rods were loaded into the reactor while it was still running. This "on-load" refuelling enhances performance of the reactor and could add millions of pounds to the profits of the privatised company. It is not yet clear whether the fault is a one-off.



Heart of gold: Sixteen-month-old Adnan Cosic and his mother Alma, from Tuzla, at Heathrow airport yesterday after arriving from Bosnia. Adnan, who suffers from a debilitating heart condition, is one of five seriously ill children evacuated from Bosnia in an operation organised by the British charity Child Advocacy International. Adnan is to be treated at the Brompton Hospital in London. Photograph: John Vos

Elderly patients were used as "guinea pigs" to test a range of new drugs without their knowledge, a disciplinary hearing was told yesterday.

They were used in various drugs trials conducted by Dr Geoffrey Fairhurst, in some cases after consent forms had been forged.

The General Medical Council's professional conduct committee was told that Dr Fairhurst also allegedly instructed a practice nurse to produce false ECG reports for patients participating in clinical drugs trials.

Dr Fairhurst, a JP and government adviser, had told the nurse that to inform patients of trials was "the kiss of death to recruit them," Rosalind Foster QC, on behalf of the GMC, said.

Dr Fairhurst, of Warrington, Lancashire, who qualified in 1962, denies serious professional misconduct.

Ms Foster told the hearing that Dr Fairhurst had abused a trusted position while conducting potentially dangerous tests on drugs for the treatment of people suffering from heart conditions and hypertension.

"The facts we will submit show that Dr Fairhurst's conduct of these clinical trials was highly irregular and dishonest," she said.

She went on to say that the charge against the doctor related to three separate drugs trials involving a number of elderly patients between 1988 and 1993.

The alleged misconduct was exposed by Dr David Edwards, the partner in his practice in St Helen's, Merseyside.

Ms Foster told the GMC committee: "You will appreciate

the importance of clinical research must be conducted with scrupulous honesty. The rational behind this is that everything possible must be done to ensure the safety of patients in [drugs] trials."

"A patient's consent is fundamental and full documentation and records is necessary if a problem in their care should arise."

She said that pharmaceutical companies also expected doctors carrying out trials to do so honestly. "Doctors are remunerated on this basis for good drugs trials."

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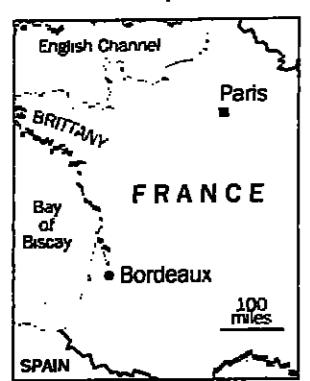
Why EU makes Bordeaux see pink

SARAH HELM
Bordeaux

Listening to Guy Saint-Martin attack *les technocrates de Bruxelles* and *les ultra-libéraux*, it is hard to believe that the Socialist mayor of Bordeaux cannot make his voice heard in the European Union capital. So penetrating is his throaty invective that it seems to echo far across the strawberry fields of the Gironne valley.

Roads around Bordeaux will be splattered pink with strawberry juice again next month. Mr Saint-Martin warns, when French farmers try to half cheap Spanish strawberries flooding in across the borders. Sir Leon Brittan (a name he utters with evident disgust) wants to open French markets to all the world. "For the benefit of whom - the multinationals?"

"Europe must be strong, yes. I believe in Europe. I voted Yes."

A small map of France with a box around the Bordeaux area. Labels include "English Channel", "Paris", "Brittany", "Bay of Biscay", and "Bordeaux". A scale bar indicates 100 miles.

to Maastricht," he says. "But today I would certainly vote No. The people are no longer heard. We will not be told what to do by technocrats in Brussels. And now, what is this we hear? They want to limit our hunting season. Have they not got better things to do? This is our culture. Who are the technocrats to say when a man can shoot a pigeon? *Qui est-ce que c'est que ce?*" he booms.

Throughout the region of Aquitaine, there is a spreading unease about the way that Europe appears to be dictating unwelcome change, and it crosses the political divide.

Bordeaux, the capital of Aquitaine, was the scene of massive demonstrations against cuts

BUILDING EUROPE

in public-service spending last year. The fact that Alain Juppé, the Prime Minister in France's Gaullist government, is Mayor of Bordeaux drew huge angry crowds to the city.

The cuts were linked to France's need to meet convergence criteria for monetary union, and, while demonstrations were not specifically aimed at Brussels, the strength of the protests and the widespread support they won across the social spectrum revealed a general malaise about Europe.

"Many people here now see Maastricht as a constraint; as rules and interference... They fear more and more about losing their identity," says Jean-Pierre Bebear, a Juppé supporter, member of the European Parliament, and a Bordeaux doctor. "If we voted here tomorrow for a new Maastricht we would have difficulty."

Last week, in his proposals for the Inter-Governmental Conference on European reform which begins in Turin next week, Mr Juppé appeared to heed the message from Bordeaux, reaffirming the pre-eminence of the "nation-state".

The nature of Bordelais Euro-scepticism would be both familiar and puzzling to a sceptic Briton. The people joke here that they have always resisted the centralising diktat of Paris - never mind Brussels - and some say that the region has never been more content than during its period of relative autonomy under English Plantagenet rule.

But very few in Aquitaine - or anywhere in France - would describe themselves as anti-European. Most say they believe that Europe is the future.

A first glance across the proud vineyards of the Medoc, the rich forests of the Landes, or the grand boulevards of Bordeaux suggests a region glowing with confidence. French farmers, for example, have



In ferment: Bordeaux, which saw huge protests over spending cuts that were linked to EU monetary-union criteria

Photograph: Robert Harding

largely done very well out of the EU, with incomes in Aquitaine rising in recent years. The maize producers of the region learnt during the Gatt world-trade talks of the necessity of a strong Europe standing as a bloc.

The farmers had to battle to stop US access to their markets. In Aquitaine, US economic power is viewed with far greater suspicion than any German giant. Furthermore, the people here are positively in favour of the single currency, believing that the stabilising of exchange rates can only help their economy, protecting them

from currency devaluations in neighbouring states.

They are delighted that the French euro coin is to be minted at Pessac, on the borders of Bordeaux. Their only concern is that Germany is imposing such strictures that France may not make the grade.

But the region nevertheless feels deep anxiety. The most common complaint is familiar one, but voiced with even more urgency. There is a "loss of identity" and a threat to "French culture". European government is a manifestation of "globalisation" - a word they spit in

thick Bordelais accents. People know that simply to blame Brussels is naïve. But they argue that the decisions of the EU are hastening the process, while doing nothing to alleviate its worst effects. Markets are being opened for "political" reasons. Moroccan tomatoes are now being given greater access to French markets.

But why should French farmers suffer to help Morocco? After the EU-Asia summit in Bangkok, there is fear of Asian competition. "We are the best - that is not the problem," says Mr Saint-Martin. "But how are

we to compete with prices from Vietnam?" Ultra-liberalism will break Europe.

The people of Aquitaine voice criticism of Europe as much for what it is doing as for what it is not doing. While nobody expects Brussels to halt the economic revolution or to turn "protectionist", it should protect local cultures and help to promote jobs.

They believed in Maastricht because it would make Europe a more coherent whole. Instead, says Mr Bebear, it proved "complicated, badly explained, badly constructed". The result

is enormous frustration and a sense of impotence.

Recent attempts to force the French to end the hunting season on 31 January have only confirmed the worst fears about the lopsided priorities of the technocrats in Brussels. "People ask: why are they talking about hunting when they should be solving social problems and dealing with the unemployed," says Pierre Cherruau, of *Sud-Ouest*. "People here believe in Europe but they don't believe this is the best way," says Philippe Costeau, at the regional council.

The old man died soon after, one of 12 victims of the most bizarre terrorist attacks in Japan's history. Half an hour before, 10 members of the Aum Shinri Kyo cult had boarded five separate trains, carrying plastic bags filled with the liquid form of sarin nerve gas. Travelling in pairs, they punctured the bags with sharpened umbrellas, before jumping off.

The cult's leader, Shoko Asahara, who finally goes on trial next month, had for years been predicting an apocalypse and acquiring chemical and biological weapons with the aim of hurrying it along. Apart from the 12 dead, 5,500 people were poisoned by the sarin. Three remain unconscious, and will probably never wake up.

By some lucky instinct, Mr Pearson remained on the platform as the train moved off. By the time it reached the next station the gas had permeated his carriage and dozens of passengers had begun fainting, bleeding through the nose, and foaming at the mouth. Still feeling fine, he made his way to the surface, "and after that I don't remember a great deal".

"My vision was going; it was like looking through a haze. I felt very nauseous, and on the verge of fainting." Somehow he struggled into a cab, and made it to the office. His colleagues took him to hospital.

Within two weeks, Mr Pearson returned to work. But a month after the attack, he woke up in the night, trembling and hyperventilating. The panic attacks came every couple of weeks. According to Kanzo Nakano, a psychiatrist, 20 per cent of the sarin victims still suffer from headaches, fatigue, dizziness, nightmares, claustrophobia, flashbacks, depression and suicidal thoughts.

"Even last month, three new patients came forward for the first time," says Dr Nakano.

"The long-term after-effects are immense, like a bottomless pit."

Taiwan
in the

Cult gas
attack
haunts
sole UK
victim

RICHARD LLOYD PARRY
Tokyo

Most people would speak of a nightmare but for Dave Pearson the effects of being poisoned by sarin nerve gas resembled a more mundane experience.

"Try to imagine it like this," he says. "the world's worst ever hangover. When they let me out of hospital, I slept for a few hours and then woke up with a raging headache. I couldn't focus on close objects, and my pupils were like pinpricks - my kids nicknamed me the Alien. Think of the worst hangover you've ever had, and then add a bit more. This went on for a fortnight. Not a pleasant experience."

A year ago this morning Mr Pearson, in his own words, "entered the history books for a few seconds" when he became the only British victim of the Tokyo subway attack. Just after 8am on 20 March 1995, he was commuting from his family's apartment in western Tokyo to the offices of Westpac Banking Corporation, the Australian company where he is Chief Manager. After one stop, people in his carriage started coughing. Mr Pearson noticed "a faint, sweet, plastic kind of smell".

The train was crowded and at the next station he had to step off to make way for disembarking passengers. "It was then that I realised that something was wrong. They were carrying an old man off the carriage in front and laying him on the platform. He was lying there with his arms and legs convulsing, and there were people all around him sitting on the floor looking very unwell."

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Kohl warns Germans of huge cuts in welfare state

IMRE KARACS
Bonn

Germany must make savage cuts in the welfare state in order to prevent it from going bust, Chancellor Helmut Kohl admitted yesterday.

"We will be forced to introduce massive savings in 1997," Mr Kohl said. "We must do everything to limit the rise of the deficit." Though the Chancellor gave no details, pensions, unemployment benefit and the

national health service are likely to be the main targets, but infrastructure projects will also suffer. The government's cost-cutting move to Berlin in 1999 could be the most spectacular casualty.

The shortfall between government revenue and expenditure also threatens another important undertaking scheduled for 1999: European monetary union. Under the rules of the Maastricht treaty, aspiring members must bring the budget deficit down to 3 per cent

of GDP, a goal which eluded Bonn last year.

As the economy bounces along the bottom, tax revenue is not keeping pace with the welfare state's burgeoning expenditure, weighed down by payments to 4.3 million jobless - the highest since the Second World War. While Bonn predicts an upswing in industry this year, the opposition argues it will not be enough to cut the dole queues.

The number-crunchers are only now coming to grips with

the effects of the unforeseen recession, and their figures make horrendous reading. Yesterday, the opposition Social Democrats claimed that there would be a DM100bn (£44bn) shortfall in tax revenue in 1997, and similar gaps in 1998 and 1999. On that basis alone Germany, and therefore Europe, can say goodbye to monetary union, especially if Bonn sticks to a pledge repeated by Mr Kohl yesterday not to raise taxes.

The government's true intentions will not be revealed, however, until this Sunday's elections in three Länder where the fate of Mr Kohl's coalition partners the Free Democrats hangs by a thread. An adverse vote could undermine the government, so the Chancellor has been understandably reluctant to divulge the diagnosis for the economy's ills. Though the Finance Minister, Theo Waigel, last week announced a token budget freeze, his savings target of DM500m was well short

of the DM16bn believed to be missing from this year's kitty.

With the elections soon out of the way, the day of reckoning approaches. "We are realising the damage the welfare state, not dismantling it," Mr Kohl vowed yesterday.

One project Mr Kohl wants ring-fenced from the builders is monetary union, destined to be the Chancellor's crowning achievement. But his government is vulnerable to the charge that it is placing the destiny of

Europe above the fates of Germany's unemployed. The Chancellor is therefore planning a relaunch of his Euro-campaign by arguing that postponement of monetary union would send the deutschmark sky-high, crippling exports and putting millions more out of work.

He might be able to sell that to the voters, but then he will still be left with one Herculean task: making the numbers add up by 1998, the year applicants to EMU are weighed in.

could be heading for a quarrelsome coalition government.

Many party leaders were sucked into the corruption scandal when a top industrialist confessed he had made pay-offs to officials and politicians in both Congress and the BDP. This stung the right hard, as their president, LK Advani, was crusading against the Congress government for corruption when the investigators of the bribery scandal fingered him.

Several Congress ministers were sacrificed by Mr Rao. Congress was also jolted by defections among its traditional supporters, the poor Hindus and Muslims, and minorities such as the Muslims and the Sikhs.

According to political experts, Mr Rao has given up the battle in northern India and is focusing his hopes on the south.

Offer ends

March 31st

SA's miracle marriage ends in bathos

PATRICK McDOWELL
Associated Press

Johannesburg - The Mandelas had no ordinary marriage, and no ordinary break-up.

By the time Nelson Mandela got the divorce he asked for yesterday, the South African President had been compelled to testify in court for the first time since the notorious treason trial in 1964. And Winnie had fired her lawyer, failed to challenge her husband's accusations of adultery, and was told by the judge to sit down and stop stalling. "This is no ordinary case," she pleaded.

"It's very sad," said George Bizos, a lawyer who represented both Mandelas over the years. "But one has to be sensible. Someone like the President cannot be put in such a position." Today the court will consider the financial settlement in what promises to be a bitter

a love letter she had written to her personal assistant, Dali Mpofu, a lawyer.

The Mandelas separated in 1992 after Winnie was convicted and fined in the kidnapping of her bodyguards of four youths, one of whom was beaten to death.

On cross-examination yesterday the defence lawyer, Ismail Semenza, asked Mr Mandela to recall his wife's suffering during their marriage. "She was subjected to very cruel persecution by the security police of the day," Mr Mandela said. But he added: "There were many women in this country who suffered far more than she did."

As the judge pressed for direct answers to challenge allegations that would be legal grounds for divorce - adultery and the couple's long separation - Mr Semenza whispered to Winnie, then announced he

had been fired. Winnie begged for a postponement to find a new lawyer. Mr Mandela's counsel and the judge called it a play to buy time.

The judge eventually ordered the case closed. Mr Mandela sat stoically, blinking occasionally. Winnie appeared drawn. Neither looked at the other.

Outside the courthouse, most of the 100 or so people awaiting a verdict opposed the divorce. "I think I'm disappointed with both of them," said Louise Dikgale, a student. "When you're separated, you can try to get back together. This is the President. He should be a role model. Everybody makes mistakes."

The couple wed in 1958 after Mr Mandela divorced his first wife.

During her husband's imprisonment, Winnie became an anti-apartheid leader in her own right, popular with the African National Congress's radical wing. She lost influence as Mr Mandela pushed the ANC along a moderate course and was fired early last year as deputy minister of arts, culture, science and technology after a series of controversies. She remains an MP and leads the ANC Women's League.

India, the world's biggest democracy, yesterday announced parliamentary elections will be held on 27 April, 2 May and 7 May, at a time when most leading political parties are entrenched in a bribery scandal.

To stage polls in a country with more than 900 million people is so vast an exercise that election officials are staggering the event. Voting in the troubled state of Jammu-Kashmir, where Muslim separatists are in revolt, has been delayed until 21 May.

The ruling Congress party of Narasimha Rao is expected to lose its majority, but its closest rival, the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is unlikely to emerge as a clear winner. India

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is facing a battle in northern India and is focusing his hopes on the south.

According to political experts, Mr Rao has given up the

battle in northern India and is focusing his hopes on the south.

"The long-term after-effects are immense, like a bottomless pit."

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CHARLIE LLOYD PARK

Taiwan fans flames in the war of words

RUPERT CORNWELL
Washington

The war of words between Washington and Peking heated up further yesterday as senior US and Taiwan officials met to discuss a reported request from Taipei for billions of dollars worth of new weapons to strengthen its defences against the military threat from the mainland.

The one-day meeting in a Virginia suburb is a regular annual event to examine Taipei's arms requirements for the forthcoming year. This time though, it coincides with China's naval and military exercises designed to intimidate the island ahead of its presidential elections this weekend – and for all its criticism of the Peking tactics, the Clinton administration is believed to be opposed to new arms deliveries to Taiwan on the grounds they would make an already fraught situation even more so.

Even as the talks began here, the usually soft-mannered Defense Secretary, William Perry, used a speech to members of Congress to warn Peking that is about to start

taking delivery of 150 F-16 fighters in a \$5.8bn (£3.8bn) deal bitterly opposed by China when President Bush gave its approval in 1992.

This year, according to the *Washington Times*, Taiwan is seeking six German-designed diesel submarines that would be built in US yards and cost some \$40m, as well as P-3 anti-submarine and reconnaissance planes, anti-ship missiles and Stinger anti-aircraft missiles.

Taken together, the weapons would considerably improve the island's ability to resist any naval blockade by China.

But despite protests in Congress that the US should be standing up more resolutely for a democratic ally being bullied by a totalitarian neighbour, caution continues to be the administration's watchword. Speaking in Singapore yesterday, Peter Tarnoff, Secretary of Political Affairs and third-rank

ing official at the State Department, said deliveries of the F-16s would not be speeded up because of the crisis. "No imminent threat exists," Mr Tarnoff insisted, "but we are concerned about a possible miscalculation."

The new tension can only exacerbate the long running dispute over China's alleged pirating of US patents and software technology.

It also means that 1996 could be the year when, after several near-misses, the anti-China forces on Capitol Hill succeed in revoking Peking's most favoured nation (MFN) trade status. The administration supports another 12-month extension when MFN comes up for renewal in June, "but it is going to be a difficult issue in Congress", Robert Rubin, the Treasury Secretary, warned in a speech to US businessmen in Hong Kong yesterday.

DETROIT DAYS

Italian sauce and Jimmy Hoffa's secret

The Machus Red Fox restaurant, where Jimmy Hoffa vanished in July 1975, has closed.

The sign still stands over the parking lot from which the former Teamsters president was believed to have been abducted and later murdered by the Mafia. But the endearingly vulgar establishment in Detroit's swanky northern suburb of Bloomfield Hills is no more – shut down after its owner refused to renew the lease.

Now only a bakery remains, tucked away at the back. The Hoffa case might never have been. No plaque or faded FBI missing-person poster, nor even any graffiti to remind you of the most celebrated unsolved mysteries in recent US history.

Or perhaps unsolved until now – which brings us to the really sensational crime news in these parts. Last Friday, the Detroit papers were running classic "Hold-the-front-page" banner headlines.

"FBI: MOB BUSTED", one screamed in three-inch type, before elaborating in more measured vein: "Alleged Mafia Boss Jack Tocco, 16 Leaders Indicted by Grand Jury for Extortion, Obstruction of Justice. 'We've driven a stake through the heart



Jimmy Hoffa: 'Disappeared after meeting mob enforcer'

of Cosa Nostra,' say Feds. And if even half the charges stick, the Feds will have done precisely that.

The nationwide crackdown on the Mafia that has led to the indictment or conviction of organised crime bosses in Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and Cleveland has now reached Detroit, threatening the godfathers of the motor city with jail for the rest of their lives. Unless, of course, they choose to talk. And no one among the 17 has more to tell than Anthony "Tony Jack" Giacalone.

Of the unprepossessing collection of jowly old men who were led into court for arraignment last week, Anthony Giacalone, now 77, may be one of the nastiest. For many years he was the Detroit family's chief "enforcer" who made sure its orders were carried out.

But his real claim to fame lies elsewhere. He visited Jimmy Hoffa at his home two weeks before his disappearance, and was the man Hoffa told exactly where he was going to meet at the Red Fox.

Some say Hoffa is entombed in the concrete masonry of a

highway interchange in Pennsylvania, others that he was buried in a New Jersey landfill, or that his corpse was rendered for grease in a Mafia-owned factory. The FBI says the Hoffa case remains open. Now, just possibly, Giacalone will close it.

Even so you wonder, where does art end and life begin? Assuming the indictments are only a quarter true, Tocco, Giacalone and the rest are an unlively bunch of hoodlums. But in private life, they could have been taken straight out of Hollywood central casting.

Take Tocco, now 69 and long a resident of the wealthy suburb of Grosse Pointe Park. His criminal record consists of a 25-misdemeanour fine 30 years ago, for attending an illegal cockfight. Neighbours have described him as "kind and generous, a great guy", who would give them tomatoes and zucchini from his garden.

Tocco's underboss Anthony Zemli, son of one of the men who founded the Detroit Mafia when it smuggled booze across the river from Canada in prohibition times, lives in a farmhouse with a trampoline and swing set outside the back door. His wife once cried when he was acquitted on extortion charges, and he tells acquaintances: "We are people just like everyone else."

As for "Tony Jack", he reportedly loves flowers and keeps the "most beautiful lawn in the neighbourhood". His brother Vito's wife insists that her husband, also indicted last week, is merely a "retired fruit-seller". She told the newspaper: "I'm waiting for him to come home and explain it all."

It sounds reassuring, in an odd way it is. Don't bother us and we won't bother you, is the Mafia's social contract – almost a friendship treaty in this age of random violence. And who takes Cosa Nostra very seriously these days? Not the average citizen, who is far more alarmed by the crack cocaine business, drive-by shootings and the gang wars which made Detroit a byword for urban mayhem in the 1970s and 1980s.

Tocco and his colleagues, by contrast, seem to have preferred old-fashioned pursuits like illegal betting, protection rackets, loan-sharking, and the odd investment in Las Vegas. Cautious and discreet even by Mafia standards, the Detroit organisation has avoided the bloody internal feuds which helped bring down John Gotti in New York. Here the factions didn't shoot each other, they married into each other.

For the time being, Tocco and his colleagues are out on bail of up to \$200,000 each – just like paying a parking ticket, one said as he left the courthouse last week.

Probably, if they are put away for good, modern Detroit will hardly notice. Except, of course, for those still intrigued by how and at whose hand, Jimmy Hoffa met his end.

Rupert Cornwell



Thanks: President Clinton meets the troops who took part in Operation Restore Democracy in Haiti last year in a ceremony at Fort Polk, Louisiana

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Sarajevans rejoice over city's reunion

EMMA DALY
Grbavica

Good cheer, in spite of sorrow over the destruction, yesterday filled the streets of Grbavica, emptied of most of its Serb residents, as thousands of Sarajevans poured across to visit the homes they had fled in 1992, or just to see the sights.

The column moved steadily towards the shattered high-rise tower blocks. "It's like Disneyland, it's just like coming to Disneyland," cried one teenage girl.

"Well it's not too badly damaged," a middle-aged man said. "There is no sign of shelling in the centre." Another woman gazed at the empty window frames, which had been stripped by Serbs who had fled.

"I don't recognise anything," she said. One man found his home empty, save for the cat he lost when he fled in 1992.

There were many reunions - cautious greetings shouted from windows by those who stayed behind in Grbavica. There were

hugs and kisses on the street. And there was at least one instant eviction by a Croat couple who had returned to find an elderly Serb woman living in their flat.

Despite the groups of young men roaming around, there was little sign of the aggressive acts seen in the western suburb of Ilidza. There, Serbs who remained suffered from threats, abuse and intimidation for several days after the transfer of power to Bosnian authority.

"It's terrible - there is so much happiness to be in Grbavica but so much sorrow too," said Nasiba Kalanovic, as she walked briskly towards the wreckage of her home.

A former Serb trench ran below her first-floor flat: the front-line building had been shelled and shot to pieces. She wept but then cheered up: "I still have one door and a balcony and that's enough for me."

Bosnian policemen shooed her party away from the trench,

fearful of mines, or boobytraps. Hazifa Mesic, an elderly Muslim woman who spent the last two nights of Serb rule in the UN "safe house" in Grbavica, terrified of arsonists and robbers, returned home yesterday to find her front door ajar.

She called the police who sent in the bomb squad. Her store cupboard was boobytrapped. But the explosion, which shattered windows and scattered debris around the flat, did not injure the explosives experts. The UN international police handed out leaflets warning householders of the dangers of mines and explosives, but there were at least two other similar incidents yesterday.

"If I had opened the door, I would be dead for sure," Ms Mesic said, trembling. "We Muslims often did not dare even to go to the market," she said, recalling life in Serb-held Grbavica. "But there were nice Serbs who helped us. They were not all bad."



Reunited: A mother and daughter meet in Grbavica yesterday. Photograph: Reuter

IN BRIEF

Benin voters plump for an old dictator

Cotonou — The former dictator Mathieu Kerekou, the first African leader to be ousted at the ballot box in the democracy movement of the 1990s, was returned to power in a stunning upset at the polls. State radio announced Mr Kerekou had won 59 per cent, overwhelming President Nicéphore Soglo, who had 41 per cent of the vote in Monday's presidential run-off.

During 17 years in power Mr Kerekou was accused of running the West African state's economy into the ground and of human rights abuses. AP

Bank boss targeted

Moscow — Unknown assailants sprayed the home of Russian Central Bank Chairman Sergei Dubinin with bullets, Interfax news agency said. Mr Dubinin was not home at the time. AP

Spy chief chosen

Jerusalem — The Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, is expected to announce the appointment of his military aide, Major General Danny Yatom, as chief of Israel's Mossad spy agency. Reuter

Ukraine has friends

Kiev — The US Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, blasted the Russian parliament for its vote denouncing the breakup of the Soviet Union and reaffirmed support for an strong, independent Ukraine. Reuter

Coma rape birth

Rochester, New York — A woman who was raped while in a coma had a premature baby, in what doctors believe is the first case of someone getting pregnant and giving birth in a vegetative state. The baby and mother appeared to be doing well, a doctor said. The 29-year-old woman's family are considering raising the child. AP

Home quake alarm

Lockhart, Texas — US Technologies Inc said it expected to launch next month a home earthquake alarm that senses the shock waves that precede the most damaging part of an earthquake. The company said the device sounds an alarm before the quake hits. Reuter

Outcry saves koalas

Adelaide — The Australian government stepped in to quash a proposal to cull up to 2,000 koalas on a wildlife sanctuary island, after an outcry from animal lovers. Reuter

Death escapes him

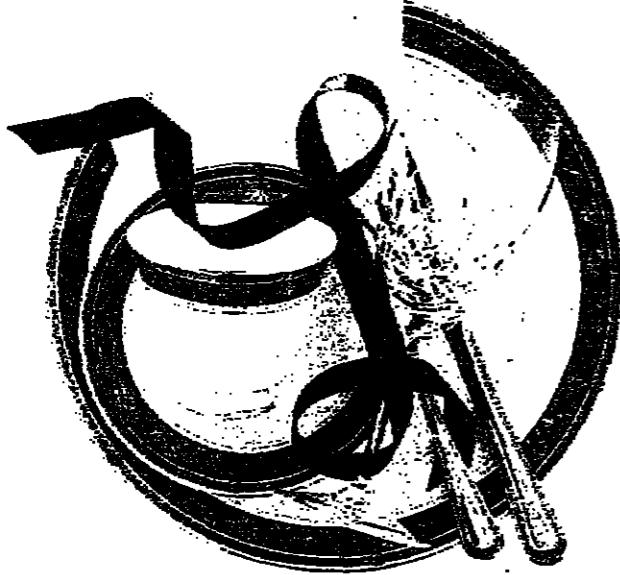
Sant Adrià del Besòs — An 88-year-old man, Antonio González Belloso, was sure he was dead after leaping out of his sixth-storey apartment. Police officers in his Barcelona suburb helped him from the pavement and broke the news of his failure. "He didn't break a single bone," a policeman said. AP

France pays up

Geneva — The United Nations, teetering on the edge of bankruptcy, praised France for paying its 1996 contribution, the only permanent Security Council member to do so. Reuter

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US fury at kidnap stories

PHIL DAVISON
Latin America Correspondent

It was a rare diplomatic furor between old friends. When King Juan Carlos of Spain handed over an \$8,200 journalism prize to a Brazilian reporter on Monday, Washington exploded.

The reporter, Ana Beatriz Magna da Silva, had written a series on illegal trafficking of Latin American children, mostly for adoption in Europe but sometimes, she suggested, so that their vital organs could be removed for transplants to wealthy patients. The series won her the Ibero-American prize, sponsored by the Spanish government.

A furious US embassy in Madrid immediately attacked its Nato ally as "an accomplice to dangerous and damaging fiction, perpetuating a myth".

The Spanish Foreign Ministry retorted that the embassy was "out of line". In Washington, a State Department spokesman said reports of babies' organ traffic was "a lie" and that there was no "credible evidence that a single case of organ or cornea theft has ever occurred."

Why was the US so angry? As a bemused Ms Magna da Silva pointed out, she had not even mentioned the US in her series and had focused on illegal adoption, not organ-stealing. The answer is threefold.

First, the US has always insisted reports of traffic in babies' organs from the Third World were a disinformation concoction of the Soviet KGB during the Cold War, spread in Latin America by agents of Fidel Castro. Secondly, the US says such reports complicate legal adoptions and legitimate organ

donations. And thirdly, several American women have been attacked by angry mobs in the Third World on suspicion of trying to steal babies.

But is there any truth to the babies' organ reports?

Kidnapping statistics from around Latin America suggest a shift from stealing children to work as beggars, to kidnapping for prostitution and more recently for sale to wealthy childless families. Concrete evidence of using them as organ donors, however, is sparse at best.

A Spanish journalist, Jose Manuel Martin Medero, author of *Ninos de Repuesto* ("Spare Parts Kids"), cited Salesian missionaries in Brazil as saying children were often held in *guardas de engorde*, "fattening-up barns" where they were held like battery hens before being killed for their organs. But no proof was

produced. Fattening-up houses were uncovered last year in Argentina and Honduras but in both cases police said the children had been kidnapped for adoption. In the Argentinian city of Goya, a gang was charging \$15,000 (\$10,000) for babies, more if they had blue eyes.

In a 1993 BBC documentary, Bruce Harris, an Englishman based in Costa Rica who campaigns for children's rights and a film-maker, Judy Jackson, claimed to have found a mental institution in Argentina where comeas were removed from the eyes of live children, who would then die. Argentine authorities, however, dispute this.

"There is more and more demand for organs and not enough supply," Mr Harris said. "In this world, whenever there's a demand, someone will make money out of it."

Keating steps down as Labor leader

ROBERT MILLIKEN

Sydney

In a clean, bloodless handover of political power, Kim Beazley yesterday replaced Paul Keating as leader of the Australian Labor Party and began the daunting task of restoring Labor's shattered fortunes less than three weeks after Mr Keating led the party to one of its most crushing electoral defeats.

Labor MPs who survived the election bloodbath on 2 March unanimously elected Mr Beazley as leader when they gathered in Canberra to accept Mr Keating's resignation and hear what is likely to be his final address to them. Mr Keating, 52, is expected to leave politics, after a parliamentary career spanning 27 years, eight as Treasurer and four as Prime Minister.



Kim Beazley: In Keating's place after election defeat

Mr Beazley, 47, the former deputy prime minister, scraped back to parliament by a handful of votes in Western Australia, relying on the distribution of preference votes. After the share-out in a few undecided marginal constituencies, the new conservative Liberal-National coalition government, led by John Howard, is likely to have a majority of more than 40 in the 148-seat House of Representatives.

Few Labor MPs questioned Mr Beazley's qualifications as the man to lead them out of their crisis. In contrast to Mr Keating, who left school at 15 and made his way through the jungle of Labor politics in New South Wales, Mr Beazley is the son of a respected former MP and minister. After education at the University of Western Australia

Italy, Mr Beazley went to Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar and returned to teach politics at Murdoch University in Perth before entering parliament in 1980.

He comes from the Labor right and was a central figure in the party's transformation during the 1980s and 1990s under the leadership of Bob Hawke and Mr Keating. Mr Beazley is an intellectual, but less aloof than Mr Keating and less likely to offend traditional Labor supporters by appearing to adopt patrician tastes and ways.

The new deputy Labor leader is Gareth Evans, 51, another Oxford graduate and survivor from Labor's 13-year rule during which he served most prominently as foreign minister.

The conservative government is taking its thumping election mandate seriously. Mr Howard has announced that Australians will have to face public spending cuts of almost A\$80m (24bn) after revealing a revised budget forecast showing a large deficit.

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Sanctions hang over Sudan for export of terror

DAVID ORR

Nairobi

It now seems inevitable Sudan will be confirmed as one of the world's pariah states. The Khartoum government is accused of harbouring internationally wanted terrorists and of having abetted an attempt on the life of the Egyptian head of state.

A UN Security Council resolution, calling on Sudan to surrender three terrorist suspects and desist from terrorist activities, expires at the end of the month. If Khartoum fails to comply, Western diplomats say, it will face another resolution, this time imposing sanctions.

Khartoum denies harbouring three Egyptians wanted in connection with the attempted assassination last year of the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak. This week Lieutenant General Omar al-Bashir, Sudan's military leader, told Salim Ahmed Salim, the visiting Organization of African Unity secretary-general, that the three men were not in Sudan.

But there is damning evidence that the ruling National Islamic Front (NIF) and the state security service were involved in



President Bashir: 'Wanted men are not in Sudan'

the attack in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, last June.

"Though the Sudanese probably didn't order the attack, we have no doubt that they facilitated travel documents for the terrorists, provided them with cover in Khartoum and transported their weapons", says an Ethiopian official who participated in drafting his government's submission to the Security Council. "The terrorists received the blessing, active support and encouragement of the NIF."

Eleven Egyptians were deployed to carry out the attack by the extremist group, Jamaat Islami, which seeks to overthrow President Mubarak and install a strict Islamic regime in Egypt.

Five were killed at the time of, or shortly after, the assassination attempt. Three were arrested in Ethiopia and are now in custody. Three escaped.

Egypt, Egypt and the United States, which has placed Sudan on a shortlist of states sponsoring terrorism, believe the three escapees are in Sudan. They have been named as Musa, Hamza, Izzat Yassin and Husayn Ahmed Shahid Ali, also known as Siraj Mohamed Hussein.

Sudan admits Siraj flew to Khartoum on a Sudan Airways flight after the attack but insists he is no longer in the country.

Knowledge of the other two suspects is denied, as is involvement in the preparation of the attack.

Khartoum has issued arrest warrants for the three and has sent envoys on a global round of damage limitation. But the international community is not convinced.

Diplomats interviewed by the *Independent* in Sudan and in neighbouring countries say that the evidence against Khartoum is incontrovertible.

The three Egyptians in custody confirm that they were harboured by Sudan after their arrival from Pakistan, where they had been based as mujahedin – fighters in the Islamic cause. They have given precise details of where they were housed in Khartoum while they planned the attack. The group carried Sudanese or Yemeni passports, which were prepared for them in the Sudanese capital.

The weapons used in the ambush near Addis Ababa airport were flown to the capital of Ethiopia from Khartoum by Sudan Airways. After the attack, a box dispatched by Sudan's General Security Bureau was found in a "safe house" used by the terrorists.

The Sudanese government might not have been involved in planning the attack but we're sure that it gave Jamaat the facilities it needed", an Egyptian diplomat said. "There are also strong indications their security services were involved."

Diplomats believe President Bashir had no advance knowledge of the attack and say he was angered when he heard of it. His dismissal of Dr Nafie Ali Nafie, head of the Sudanese External Security Service, is seen as confirmation the organisation was involved in the plot.

It is not thought possible that the terrorists could have prepared their mission without the assistance of the NIF which, under the leadership of Dr



Fundamentals of Islam: Young men studying the Koran in a crowded schoolroom outside Khartoum.

Photograph: Conne Dufka/Reuters

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People living on their own – divorcees, single parents, affluent yuppies – are revolutionising our culture, says Glenda Cooper

The single society

Sainsbury's announces a reduction on its Chicken Tikka Meal for One. A year's supply is snatched off the shelves in under two weeks.

If any more proof were needed of the rise of single-person power, it could only be the introduction of the best idea since sliced bread – the half-loaf, created by Hovis for single people.

We have become so concerned about the crisis of the traditional family unit that we have paid less attention to a quieter but no less profound revolution in our culture: its singleisation.

The rise of the single person is one of the most powerful forces shaping our society. Manufacturers and retailers are changing goods and services to suit single people. Estimates of our housing needs and so the amount of rural land we will need for homes is vitally affected by the rising number of single-person households.

More profoundly even than that, the idea that single people of all ages are the essential units of our society, rather than families, challenges many of our central assumptions about what holds society together.

The rise of the single person is inseparable from the crisis of the traditional family. Twenty or 30 years ago the two-plus family was assumed to be the norm. Young people might be single for a limited period while they "experimented" with life, before they started courtship and settled down. But apart from that, singleness was an oddity thrust upon people by tragedy as widows and widowers, or the calamity of divorce.

Not so these days. More and more people are living alone

out of choice. According to a report published today by Mintel, the market research group, the number of people living alone will increase by 17 per cent by 2000, by which time eight million households will consist of people living by themselves. The group with the highest growth will be affluent men and women under 35 who have never married, the kind of people who are the heroes of *This Life*, the BBC2 soap opera about young lawyers, which started this week.

But it is not just young singles who are creating the new culture. Older people are living longer. Women have a life expectancy of 78.5 years compared with 73 some 30 years ago. An official population trend report yesterday suggested that four in 10 marriages will end in divorce; more people are having spells of being single in middle-age. Being single is something that can now happen to people several times in their life at different ages.

Yet single people are not just the aspirational heart of our society. There are also worries that a society of atomised individuals will fragment. Single people are indeed blamed for many of society's ills: single young men commit a high proportion of crimes; single parents are blamed by the right for failing children; the growing number of frail elderly people living alone is one of the greatest burdens upon the welfare state; and in the wake of the Dunblane killings the sad loner has become an ever more threatening image.

What is clear is that single culture is now deeply embedded in a way that it wasn't even 15 years ago. This in part explains the

resurgence of the cinema. In the past 10 years cinema audiences have doubled from around 50 million to 120 million a year, and young people are among the most avid cinema-goers, with 72 per cent of 16- to 24-year-olds going at least once every three months.

As consumers they are pampered, especially the young. Manufacturers are rushing to woo them. Nearly two thirds of single women and 54 per cent of single men are in the affluent ABC1 economic groups. Three-quarters of single men and two-thirds of women work full time.

The most graphic example of their spending power is the rise of the ready-cooked meal. Britons spend more than £1m every day on chilled foods or meals for one. Industry analysts expect this to rise by 10 per cent this year.

Sainsbury's says that its sales to singles had gone up so dramatically that it has introduced 200 ready meal lines in the past year. Angela Hughes, consumer research manager for Mintel, explains: "Single portions have got more popular. The half-loaf by Hovis is a great innovation. Five years ago smaller dishwashers and smaller fridges would have been a rarity but now they are quite common."

Singles also lie behind the growth of the leisure economy, now one of the country's largest employers. Singles have on average eight hours more leisure time a week than their married counterparts, and they use it. While they tend to read more, they also go out more.

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Young singles are also more demanding consumers. They are the main force behind the emergence of more environmentally friendly products: they are more likely to eat organic foods, fresh fruit and wholemeal bread when they are not gobbling ready meals.

Yet one of the most dramatic changes the rise of the singles will bring will be on the future of housing policy. The Government has increased its estimate for the number of new homes needed in England over the next 15 years by almost a million households, which represents a conurbation as large as greater Birmingham.

In the past five years the Department of the Environment's projections for the increase in the number of households by the year 2011 have been increased from 15 per cent to 18.5 per cent. The largest increase is among single-person households.

If these latest estimates are correct, then controversies over where to build new homes in the next century will be fierce. Single young people may be environmentally aware but the rise of single culture may pose huge environmental costs.

That only goes to prove how central single culture will be to our politics in future. Singlehood is both something we aspire to and the source of many of our ills.



CHRIS LOUFE/NEWS TEAM

The executive
Heath Bartmanis, 28, works for a recruitment agency. He recently bought a house.

I had come out of a relationship I wasn't happy in and was happy to live on my own. You set your own rules. It sounds selfish but you don't have to answer to anyone.

I've become more sociable since I was single. I go out more. I go to the cinema, the theatre. I'm not spoilt. I go out with a group of friends and we're a pact that we'll stay single until the autumn.

About 90 per cent my single friends would say they are better off out of relationships. We're not unattractive, it's that we choose to be on our own. I've found it cheaper, too. You're only paying for one, you don't have to buy any presents.

I'm open-minded about the future. I've spent the past six or seven years in relationships and I'd like to spend some time on my own. Your principles and values tend to fall by the wayside over a number of years of going out with someone. I would like some time to find myself.

Interviews by Glenda Cooper



Theo Shor, a 27-year-old studio manager with BBC World Service. He bought a home in Kingston-on-Thames last year.

A few decades ago I would have stayed at home until I got married.

Being single does give me a sense of achievement. I can make things the way I want them. Financially it's not as easy. It costs more to live alone – there's no one to share the bills.

All that stuff about fragmenting society – I travel around a lot and I think your community isn't necessarily the people on your doorstep.



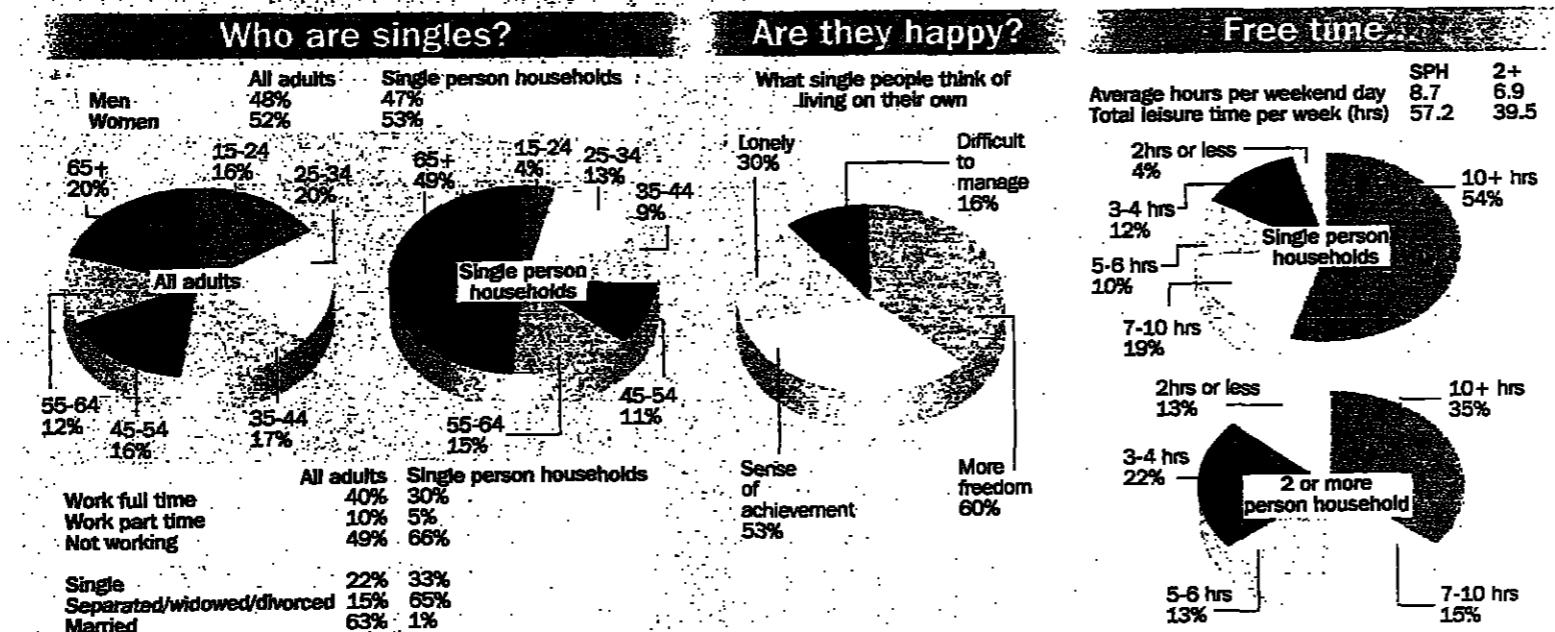
Dr Jenny Connor, 37, is a consultant radiologist in Durham. She has lived alone for 12 years.

I would never have ended up doing half the things I wanted to do if I'd settled down ages ago. I was too busy thoroughly enjoying myself.

I live in this huge, wonderful farmhouse, which I bought myself. If I'd been with someone, then they might have dissuaded me.

I have a lot of single friends and they tend to be independently minded women. I think men are terrified of the people on your doorstep.

The rise of the single society



Some things you just can't tell

The Campaign for Freedom of Information awards will be presented by Tony Blair next Monday at a ceremony in, er, well, actually that's a bit of a secret. Yesterday Tom Arms, the editor of the Future Events News Service, which supplies news organisations with details of forthcoming events, rang the campaign to find out where the event was being held. The press release had neglected to give the location of the venue.

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that information," an official at the campaign told Mr Arms. "But you're the Campaign for Freedom of Information," Mr Arms spluttered. "Yes, but we only wanted invited guests coming, not just anyone," replied the official.

So, there it is. No information will be forthcoming about the Campaign for Freedom of Information's awards venue. However, in the spirit of open government, I can exclusively reveal that Mr Blair will be presenting the awards at the City Conference Centre, 76 Mark Lane, London EC3. And I trust that next year a Campaign for Freedom of Information award will become the way of Eagle Eye for remediating the abuse of freedom of information by the Campaign for Freedom of Information.

Bedroom style in the new South Africa?

I hope the editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* is following the Nelson and Winnie Mandela divorce case. Mr Mandela is one of the most renowned orators of the post-war years. But can he ever have come up with so poignant and

DIARY

memorable a phrase as that describing his marriage over the last few years: "Even since I came back from prison, not once has the defendant ever entered our bedroom while I was away."

I suspect that it will take its place in future volumes alongside Princess Diana's Panorama quote, "There were three people in that marriage, and that's a bit crowded" – two comments on matrimony, either of which could

easily form the first sentence of a novel.

Shadow thumbscrews

I caught a beguiling entry in the minutes of a meeting of the Shadow Cabinet: "The Shadow Agriculture Secretary spoke and was subjected to interrogation and comment," the

minute says. Subjected to interrogation? Whatever happened to "was asked some questions". It's a man's life in Tony Blair's team. He has ways of making you talk.

Fear not Fab Four, you still have a fan

Harry Greenway, the Conservative MP, is raising in the Commons the reluctance of Radio 1 to play the Beatles' new single "Real Love" from the second *Anthology* album.

Detractors of Mr Greenway are apt to accuse him with gross unfairness of jumping on publicity bandwagons. But I was happy to believe that the House of Commons contains at least one unconstructed Beatlemaniac.

So I asked Mr Greenway about his passion for the Fab Four. He reflected, then replied: "I do like 'She Loves You'. It's got an excellent beat, and it's a very good tune." Not exactly an acute or an effusive analysis 33 years after the song was released. But these MPs are cautious chaps.

It's a cell-out: Woody, Gaby and the Snowman

Nicholas Soames, the son of the South Bank Centre in London, has been busy creating an image as defender of minority tastes such as Stockhausen, the man who stages the most popular of popular entertainers.

So I was surprised to see him celebrating his birthday on Monday in the Royal Albert Hall, the Royal Festival Hall, watching his wife Gaby whispering in his ear. "What's the Snowman?" I asked. "It must be a rather sweet nothing," a friend of mine, a critic of New Orleans jazz.

Indeed it was. She had given him a hand-knit pattern she presumably gathered from years of giving old programmes by torchlight in the dark at concerts. If the light failed, she would take the batteries out and put them under your arm to keep you warm. The result of this was that they have a very nice life, and light will be unnecessary.

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Beware of foolish pledges, Mr Blair

Labour is having a tough time over the railways. Having consistently opposed the privatisation of Railtrack, Labour leaders have repeatedly prevaricated over whether a future government would buy it back. But as the sale of the nation's tracks and signals looms ever closer, the pressure is on for Labour to make its intentions clear.

By failing to promise to renationalise the railway lines, Labour appears to be treading it both ways. But in fact Labour is not making a definite commitment to buy back Railtrack, even though the privatisation is a grave mistake. The fact is that the sell-off will go ahead this spring, and once the dastardly deed is done it may not be worth a future Labour government reversing it.

Selling off the odd goblet from the family silver in countless other cases has proved a very sensible thing to do. This paper has supported privatisation whenever industries can benefit from the disciplines of competition, the rigours of private sector management, access to private capital and the pressures from shareholders. But Railtrack, long tucked away at the back of the cupboard, is a silver tub too far.

The usual arguments in favour of private ownership do not apply this time. For start, the rail network is a national monopoly with no prospect of direct competition. So there will be no efficiency gains through competing for the custom of train operators. Second, many of the advantages of private sector management can easily be achieved under public ownership. Railtrack already contracts to much of the engineering and maintenance work to private firms.

The pursuit of profit could provide the incentive for additional managerial improvements - but at a cost. Running a public transport network in the interests of shareholders may lead to commercial aims, but at the expense of other important objectives, including sustaining local communities and limiting the use of cars. Shareholders cannot guarantee to make the best investment decisions either. New rail projects could be ditched because they do not generate a short-term profit despite long-term returns and social benefits. For all these reasons, Labour has been right to oppose a Railtrack privatisation motivated by the Government's dash for tax cuts before an election. But

once the sell-off has happened, renationalisation would face serious obstacles. The first, inevitably, is cash. Buying back just 51 per cent of the shares in Railtrack would cost at least £1bn, probably much more. A new Labour government would be under heavy pressure to spend the money elsewhere. In theory it may be a very sensible decision to borrow today for an asset that will bring you a return for a long time in the future. But as far as the Treasury, the City and the general public are concerned, Labour will just be spending money that would be more usefully directed elsewhere. Borrowing for capital investment is treated in the same way in the government accounts as borrowing for current expenditure on unemployment benefits, cutting class sizes, or paying for more intensive care beds.

Even if the money was available to buy Railtrack back, the new government would need to be sure that it had found a way round the equally crippling short-termism in the public sector. Everyone knows that British Rail was starved of investment long before privatisation ever appeared on the agenda. Until Labour develops a mechanism to protect cost-effective, long-term investment from short-term, political pressures to divert money elsewhere it should not even dream of renationalising Railtrack. Given all these difficulties, a new Labour government would be wise to look at how it would regulate Railtrack in the public interest, rather than attempting to renationalise.

Labour might scupper the sale by promising to renationalise. But that commitment would open it up to ferocious negative campaigning from the Conservatives over a large spending commitment. Most likely Labour will be left in the intellectually uncomfortable position of rightly arguing against privatisation but refusing to renationalise. That may seem like expediency but it makes good sense for the party to examine its other priorities, and regulatory options for exerting public control. Privatisation does not make much sense, but public ownership has hardly been an unalloyed success. What matters for the success of the rail network is creating the right mixture of regulatory controls and incentives to encourage modernisation and investment, regardless of whether it is in the public or private sector.

Fiasco in Yorkshire

The scene is a small Bradford public house close to the end of the century. The men in the snug bar are reminiscing about the days of hardship before the recent brought the local water company 'sort out the perpetual mess' it was in. 'Aye, we went for three months using the one cup of water to brush my teeth in,' says the first. 'You were lucky having any water, remember when the water company had to rip out the bath and replace it with a shower. Enforced showering, they did it.' 'That's nothing,' answers the third. 'We lost all our belongings in great water evasions of 1996, when eels were forced marched over the minnows in search of water.'

'You lot are soft,' concluded the fourth. 'Things got so bad in our neck of the woods the only way you could get water was through taking it from the sea and desalinating it.'

'This might be funny if it did not sound really like a brainwashing session among hapless senior executives of Yorkshire Authority. It takes quite a lot to displace

British Gas from the top spot at Britain's most disliked utility. But the boys at Yorkshire water, led by the sorry Mr Trevor Newton, have done just that. The mess that Yorkshire Water has got into, revealed so tellingly at the independent inquiry which opened this week in Leeds, would be comic had it not got so close to catastrophe.

Mr Newton has admitted that despite waves of investment the company has still failed to meet its targets for reducing the amount of water that leaks out of its pipes. The performance of Yorkshire Water will be seen as a test case of the effectiveness of regulation of the privatised water industry.

There is not enough competition in the water industry to drive out incompetent managers. This case has shown it requires an unprecedented public outcry to bring change. That does not just cast Yorkshire Water in a poor light, it also suggests that the regulators of the industry, Ofwat and the National Rivers Authority, should be in the dock alongside Mr Newton.

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TV junkies: if you want a life, get a wife

This device called a V-chip that will enable adults to edit out undesirable elements from their children's television viewing is all very well, but what is needed much more drastically is a device to deactivate television sets when adults are watching something unworthy of their attention.

I am a lucky man.

I have such a device.

It is called a wife.

Often, when I am watching a political debate or a discussion programme or a forgotten black-and-white musical or a documentary on sheep diseases in Tasmania, she will come into the room and say: 'What on earth are you watching this rubbish for?' And my mouth will fall open as I prepare to defend myself, but no words will come out because I suddenly realise that it is rubbish and the only reason I was watching it was curiosity. I used to use this as an excuse.

'I am just curious to see what other people watch on TV.'

'Well, now you know,' she says, not unkindly, and I find my hand reaching out to switch it off.

But recently I have developed some more sophisticated excuses. 'I wasn't actually watching the programme - I was just checking this



MILES KINGTON

video to see if it had anything on worth preserving, so I had to switch the TV on.'

Sometimes they can be even more sophisticated than that.

'I was just checking to see if this video was the one you wanted keeping on the shelf,' I say. 'It's just that I am watching television to safeguard your best interests.'

Does it work? Well, it works to the extent that she usually leaves the room silently without making a reply, but that, of course, is one of the many ways in which women win arguments, so no, it doesn't work, and I switch off as she leaves.

Another excuse I sometimes use is work-related. The other day I was glancing at television in the morning at that time of day when the only available programmes on television all feature stories full of concerned

and angry-looking people in an audience, and a man with a microphone striding among them, usually stopping at an inoffensive-looking man and saying to him aggressively. 'You've heard Mrs Chambers' experience. Can you explain how a GP like yourself could let a thing like that happen?'

And just as the GP is saying, 'Well, of course I am tremendously sorry for Mrs Chambers, but what you have got to remember is that, statistically speaking, an event like this is very ...' your wife comes in and stands watching silently for a moment or two, and says: 'I didn't know you were so interested in arthritis,' and you say, 'No, I'm not really, but I was thinking of writing a parody of this sort of programme one day, so it's quite important that I should know what they are like.'

And there is a grain of truth in this, because it's quite important, even if we don't like them, that we should all know who Anne and Nick, and Judy, and Richard, and people in *EastEnders* and *Neighbours* are, because otherwise we won't be able to hold our own in conversations about television for even understanding the cover of the *Radio Times* - I have just bought the new one

which has a photo-portrait of a woman holding a child on the front, captioned 'Kathy and Baby by Lord Lichfield', and I have no idea who Kathy is, or why Lord Lichfield has fathered a baby by her. So then my wife gives me the benefit of the doubt and goes out silently, and I think to myself, 'Why am I watching this rubbish?' and I switch off and the device has worked again - my television viewing has been curtailed.

The great thing is that after a year or two of use, the wife TV-switching-off device doesn't even have to be in the room, just somewhere in the house.

You hear a noise. You say to yourself, 'Would you honestly want her to come in and find you watching this? No, you wouldn't.'

Yes, it actually uplifts the standard of your television viewing from more than a hundred miles away. A wife. Get one today.

Cutting the risk of breast cancer

Sir: You report research in Finland which suggests that milk may protect women against breast cancer ('Milk may help ward off cancer', 11 March). Taken in isolation, this finding will send a strong signal to the public.

Milk and its derivatives do contain an essential fatty acid, linoleic acid, which is protective against cancer, but these foods also contain high levels of unhealthy (saturated) fats which are strongly associated with risk of cancer and heart disease. Regular consumption of animal fats has been shown

to greatly increase the risk of breast cancer and of heart disease.

Women who are concerned to ward off breast cancer would be better advised to include in their diet fish oils, linseed oil or evening primrose oil, all of which contain only linoleic acid, the protective substance in milk, but also other nutrients which provide, safely, a degree of protection against cancer.

DR ROSY DANIEL
Bristol Cancer Help Centre
Bristol

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Does it work? Well, it works to the extent that she usually leaves the room silently without making a reply, but that, of course, is one of the many ways in which women win arguments, so no, it doesn't work, and I switch off as she leaves.

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and angry-looking people in an audience, and a man with a microphone striding among them, usually stopping at an inoffensive-looking man and saying to him aggressively. 'You've heard Mrs Chambers' experience. Can you explain how a GP like yourself could let a thing like that happen?'

And just as the GP is saying, 'Well, of course I am tremendously sorry for Mrs Chambers, but what you have got to remember is that, statistically speaking, an event like this is very ...' your wife comes in and stands watching silently for a moment or two, and says: 'I didn't know you were so interested in arthritis,' and you say, 'No, I'm not really, but I was thinking of writing a parody of this sort of programme one day, so it's quite important that I should know what they are like.'

And there is a grain of truth in this, because it's quite important, even if we don't like them, that we should all know who Anne and Nick, and Judy, and Richard, and people in *EastEnders* and *Neighbours* are, because otherwise we won't be able to hold our own in conversations about television for even understanding the cover of the *Radio Times* - I have just bought the new one

which has a photo-portrait of a woman holding a child on the front, captioned 'Kathy and Baby by Lord Lichfield', and I have no idea who Kathy is, or why Lord Lichfield has fathered a baby by her. So then my wife gives me the benefit of the doubt and goes out silently, and I think to myself, 'Why am I watching this rubbish?' and I switch off and the device has worked again - my television viewing has been curtailed.

The great thing is that after a year or two of use, the wife TV-switching-off device doesn't even have to be in the room, just somewhere in the house.

You hear a noise. You say to yourself, 'Would you honestly want her to come in and find you watching this? No, you wouldn't.'

Yes, it actually uplifts the standard of your television viewing from more than a hundred miles away. A wife. Get one today.

MILES KINGTON

video to see if it had anything on worth preserving, so I had to switch the TV on.'

THE INDEPENDENT • Wednesday 20 March 1996

BUSINESS NEWS DESK: (tel 0171-293 2530; fax 0171-293 2098)

Bass in talks to buy Allied's stake in Carlsberg Tetley

JOHN SHEPHERD
Business News Editor

Bass is locked in talks to buy Allied Domecq's interest in Carlsberg Tetley — the joint brewing venture set up three years ago between Allied and Carlsberg of Denmark.

A deal would give Bass control of the Tetley brand and return it to pole position in the UK brewing league, a position it lost last year when Scottish & Newcastle bought Courage.

Tentative talks between Bass and Allied began before Christmas but more concrete discussions have now started to take place. Although the negotiations are fraught with difficulty, Bass is still keen to strike a deal and gain control of the Tetley bitter brand — one of the top two selling beers in the UK.

Bass's initiative is part of what industry analysts believe is an "inevitable consolidation" in the industry to deal with an over-supply of product. Brewers can now produce five pints for every four they can sell.

The takeover would almost certainly make Bass, led by chairman and chief executive Sir Ian Prosser, the biggest brewer in the UK once more. It would also deal a sharp blow to Whitbread, the country's fourth largest beer producer. Whitbread has also been trying to

court Carlsberg Tetley, which analysts reckon is worth up to £500m, and also lost out in the race to buy Courage.

Both Bass and Allied Domecq yesterday stood rigidly behind a "no comment" policy when questioned about the talks, and the possibility that a deal may be consummated before the summer. However, an industry source said: "The two sides have been in discussions for some time, and they have recently achieved some considerable progress."

It is also understood that the Office of Fair Trading and the mergers and acquisitions advisory unit at the Department of Trade and Industry have been consulted. Any move by Bass would undoubtedly result in tough concessions, such as selling some breweries or pubs, to obtain the necessary regulatory approval.

Combined market shares of Bass and Carlsberg Tetley would be close to 40 per cent, a figure which would make even this lenient Government on takeovers and mergers balk at the prospect of allowing such a giant to be created. Bass has around 23 per cent and Carlsberg Tetley about 16 per cent of the UK market, compared to S&N's 30 per cent.

Moreover, there is a big geographical overlap between the

two companies — principally in the Midlands and Yorkshire, where their combined market shares exceed 70 per cent in many areas. Bass has eight breweries and Carlsberg Tetley five; both have large sites in Burton-on-Trent.

One analyst said yesterday that the overlaps would lead to far bigger cost savings than those that resulted from S&N's purchase of Courage. Besides the Burton breweries, Bass and Allied also own sites close to each other in the North and Midlands. Bass has breweries in Birmingham and Sheffield, while Allied has sites in Leeds and Northampton.

The industry source said that any moves by Bass to strip out costs through closing breweries could cause alarm for the Government as the clock ticks away to the general election. "Time is not on Bass's side," he added.

The negotiations are also complicated because of the overlap in brands — particularly Carlsberg lager and Bass's Carling Black Label.

Carlsberg, the Danish company that teamed up with Allied, earns around 30 per cent of its profits from the UK and, according to sources, is adamant that it will ring-fence its trading position before giving its sanction to any deal.

Comment, page 17.



Brewing a deal: Sir Ian Prosser, chairman of Bass, which could end up with a market share of nearly 40 per cent but might have to sell some of its pub chain

Hanson's power plans face Offer threat

MARY FAGAN
Industrial Correspondent

Stephen Littlechild: Raises questions of integration

Offer, the electricity industry watching, may clamp down on moves by the Hanson conglomerate to become one of the UK's main generators if the Government blocks bids by National Power and PowerGen to buy regional electricity firms. Hanson, which has already snapped up Eastern Electricity and is taking over power plants from PowerGen, is among the frontrunners to acquire £1bn worth of plant from National Power.

The Monopolies and Mergers Commission is to report within weeks on proposed takeovers by National Power and PowerGen, of respectively, Southern Electricity and Midlands Electricity. Industry sources say that if these bids are stopped, the regulator would then question whether Hanson

should be allowed to build up a powerful vertically integrated electricity company.

The view in the City is that the Government decided to refer the National Power and PowerGen bids because they would recreate the vertical structure — combining genera-

tion with regional distribution and supply firms — that was dismantled before the industry was privatised. Hanson's takeover of Eastern, coupled with its ambitions in generation, have a similar effect.

Announcing his decision late last year, Ian Lung, President of the Board of Trade, said: "I have decided to refer the PowerGen/Midlands Electricity and National Power/Southern mergers to the MMC because I consider that each of them raises competition concerns in the generation and supply of electricity in England and Wales."

Offer refused to comment on the structure of the industry and the implications of the MMC's report. However, one industry source said that Professor Stephen Littlechild, Offer's director general, had made plain his concerns. The source said: "If the generators' takeover bids are blocked on the grounds

of vertical integration he would raise questions over Eastern's attempts to buy the National Power plants. That would be where he is coming from."

The MMC was originally due

to report to ministers by the end of the week but on Monday was granted an extension to 4 April.

If Hanson succeeds in buying

the three power plants from National Power, it would emerge as one of the largest UK generators. The group has already agreed to pay about £400m for the lease of two generating stations from PowerGen and industry analysts estimate that it could have 12 per cent of the market in England and Wales within a few years. This compares with a projected 16 or 17 per cent for PowerGen and an expected decline in National Power's share to about 25 per cent or less, from 34 per cent last year.

Hanson is bidding for the National Power stations against

companies including Applied Energy Services and Mission Energy of the US. Two other US groups, as yet unnamed, are also known to be in talks with the UK generator but at a less advanced stage. The plants are at West Burton in Nottinghamshire, Ironbridge in Shropshire and Rugeley in Staffordshire. Both National Power and PowerGen have been forced to dispose of plant because Professor Littlechild wants more competition in the generating marketplace.

The delay in the MMC's report has fuelled speculation that it may recommend that ministers clear the bids, but only if the generators meet stringent conditions. It is thought that the companies would resist pressure to sell off yet more power plants, particularly in the light of government plans to privatise the most modern nuclear power stations as one company.

Goldman Sachs shows threefold earnings rise

DAVID USBORNE
New York

Partners in Goldman Sachs are in line for sharply increased cash bonuses following another surge in pre-tax earnings in the first quarter of the bank's financial year. In a private briefing at the firm's Wall Street headquarters, its senior partner and chairman, Jon Corzine, reported that earnings for the quarter ending 29 February soared to \$586m (£367m), a threefold increase on earnings of the same quarter a year ago.

The stellar performance provides further evidence of the turnaround in the fortunes of Goldman Sachs, the last big private partnership on Wall Street. In common with most of the industry, the bank took a beating in 1994, thanks largely to climbing interest rates and a depressed bond market. Mr

Corzine took over at the end of 1994 when the firm was at its lowest ebb. It was the fifth consecutive quarter to show improving earnings and the firm's fourth most profitable quarter ever. Because of its status as a partnership, it is impossible to estimate after-tax earnings. The partners are taxed on their individual shares in the profits. "It was a very positive quarter for all divisions, there was very consistent profitability," one partner who was at the briefing told the New York Times. Mr Corzine noted recently: "We have had favourable markets; we have had a relatively attractive environment to execute a turnaround". Mr Corzine, who heads a total of 174 partners, has been credited with returning Goldman Sachs to health after the setbacks of two years

ago. He ordered a scaling back of expenses including a shedding of some of its workforce.

Only weeks ago, Goldman Sachs was agonising over a proposal to abandon its partnership model and to go public in an attempt to reinforce its capital base. The plan was rejected, however, after a large number of its junior partners objected that they would be unfairly penalised by such a move.

Financial statements due to be published shortly are expected to show a healthy expansion of the firm's capital from \$4.9bn to well over \$5bn at the end of February. Total revenue last year to well over \$3bn at the end of February. Total revenue last year reached \$1.464bn while expenses — mostly in the form of compensation to the partners — also climbed to \$899m. For the same quarter a year ago, revenue was \$916m and costs \$746m.

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Loophole could mean more bonuses in gold

NIGEL COPE

The City's practice of paying bonuses to top earners in gold bullion could be set to return after a tax consultancy claimed to have found a loophole in the law regulating insurance contributions.

The new scheme has been launched as the Government starts a fresh clampdown on tax avoidance, particularly schemes involving payments in kind. The new get-tough policy follows government moves which have already outlawed payments from gold, diamonds and fine wines, as well as rare metals such as rhodium and platinum.

However, some companies have continued to avoid National Insurance payments by paying bonuses in antiques and oriental curios.

The Croxton Plan, launched by Croxton this week, avoids

National Insurance contributions by paying bonuses as "liquidated damages in advance". Though the consultancy is vague on details, the payments appear similar to "golden handcuffs" deals under which an employee is promised a lump sum for loyalty if he or she stays with the company for a certain duration. Under Croxton's scheme, that payment is made in advance instead of at the end of the period. It is offering payments in gold and unit trusts.

The Groucho Plan is promoted as "the plan that shoots holes in all others" and its literature is festooned with illustrations of the Marx brothers as well as several former Chancellors. These include Kenneth Clarke, dressed as Father Christmas. Michael Davey, Croxton's managing director, says he stumbled on the loophole while working on another tax case but

claims it is perfectly legal. "No plan we have devised has ever been challenged," he says.

The scheme seems certain to arouse the interest of the Inland Revenue and Department of Social Security, which are taking an increasingly hard line on such measures.

Over the last month both agencies have been writing to companies that have used these methods to determine whether or not the carpets or stamps ever really existed or if they were merely a ruse to avoid National Insurance. If such proof is not forthcoming the companies could be liable to payments at 10.2 per cent.

According to Jim Yuill at accountants Ernst & Young, the move will catch out many companies which thought they had reduced their tax liability. "An awful lot of companies are going to get their fingers burned."

Investment: Hopes at Lucas that Simpson legacy will last

On the doll with the supermodels

Market Report: P&O steams into view

18

19

20

Surprise surge in Japanese growth rate

DIANE COYLE
Economics Editor

The Japanese economy grew at the fastest rate for five years in the final quarter of 1995, in the clearest signal so far that recovery is taking root. A surprise increase in consumer spending accounted for most of the gain.

Separate figures from the US showed an unexpected surge in new housebuilding in February despite the blizzards. This further sign that growth is reviving briefly boosted shares above Monday's record level, now that financial markets have got over the shock of realising an interest rate reduction is unlikely.

The 0.9 per cent rise in Japan's GDP in the fourth quarter took analysts by surprise. Monthly figures had pointed to more subdued growth.

With revisions to earlier quarters, the country's national output has expanded by more than 2 per cent in nine months. It grew 2.5 per cent in the year to the fourth quarter.

Eric Fishwick, an analyst at the Industrial Bank of Japan, said many economists would now be raising their forecasts for the economy in 1996. "The fact the recovery seems to have become more broadly based means some of the risks overhanging the economy could have diminished. It is the quality rather than the quantity of the growth which is significant." Some economists remained

very cautious. Graham Turner at Tokai Bank said that the spending growth was achieved by heavy discounting. "Although the growth is encouraging, a lot of things still do not look too well for the future," he said.

These include the hangover of bad debts afflicting the financial system, an increase in the number of bankruptcies and confidence still near rock-bottom. Most experts think the Bank of Japan will need to run its extremely low interest rate policy for at least another year.

Government spending on public works rose 6.9 per cent in the last quarter of last year, but the biggest contribution to the rise in GDP came from a 0.4 per cent increase in consumer spending. Housing investment surged 7.2 per cent.

In the US, housing starts

climbed 3 per cent in February to an annual level of 1.49m units. They reached a level 12.7 per cent higher than a year earlier as buyers rushed to take advantage of low mortgage rates.

During recent weeks mortgage rates have climbed to 7.83 per cent from an average of 7.08 per cent in February. Building permits have settled at a lower level than new starts, suggesting housebuilding could fall back later. But the figure cheered economists. "Once people buy and build homes they have to buy appliances and furnish them," said Waldo Best at BZW.

Comment, page 17

Actuaries set to rebuff industry over disclosure

PETER RODGERS
Business Editor

Pressure by industry to avoid full disclosure of the capital cost of directors' pension benefits looks likely to be rebuffed by the professional body representing actuaries.

The Institute and Faculty of Actuaries, which has been asked to draw up a detailed blueprint for implementing the disclosure requirements of the Greenbury report on executive pay, is thought to have come down in favour of a tough line that would involve some form of disclosure of the capital value.

The actuaries are still

waiting

for

the responses to a consultation exercise in an attempt to find ways to satisfy the diametrical

ly opposed views of employers and pension funds.

The CBI, the Institute of Directors and Sir Richard Greenbury, who chaired the pay committee, have told the actuaries that they favour disclosing only the amount of annual pension payable to a director at retirement age. This will show the increase in future pension that results from a pay increase in a given year.

But the National Association of Pension Funds has demanded full disclosure of the capital value of a director's pension benefits. This could force companies to report benefits in the millions when highly paid executives receive large pay increases, and is being resisted by employers' representatives.

But although the actuaries

have formed their own view in favour of reporting capital values, they have not yet put recommendations to the Government or the Stock Exchange, which commissioned their report. A meeting is expected in the next week or so.

In the absence of a clear consensus, one view is that the actuaries will present their own recommendations, summarise those of industry and the City about what should be done and leave it to the Stock Exchange and the Department of Trade and Industry to make a final choice. This could force companies to report benefits in the millions when highly paid executives receive large pay increases, and is being resisted by suggesting techniques that would smooth out the big variations in capital value.

Clar

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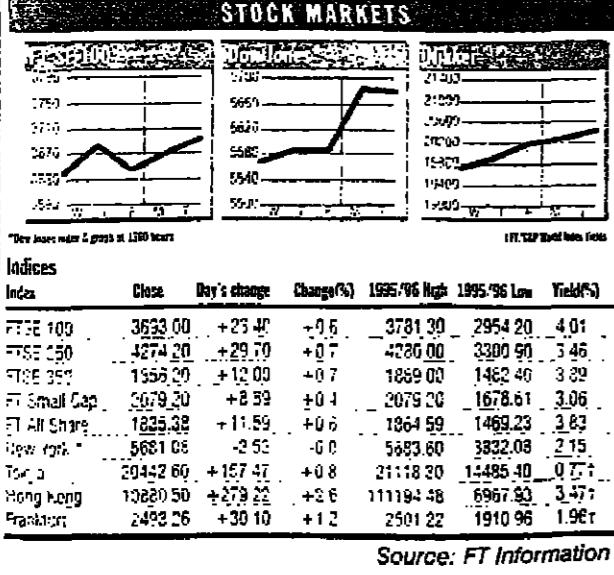
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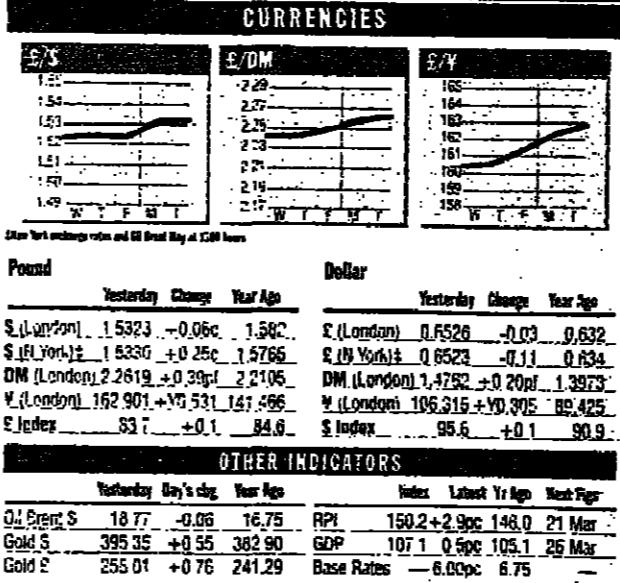
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Whoopie, thought Bass, which until S&N overtook it with the Courage takeover, was number one in the market. Anything goes now.

COMMENT
Big consolidating mergers are all the rage in most industries these days and brewing is no exception. We've already had Scottish & Newcastle's takeover of Courage. Now it looks as though we might get something even more daring - a Bass takeover of Carlsberg Tetley.

When S&N acquired Courage the Government just waved it through with minimum conditions attached. This despite the fact that it breached an important benchmark - that any merger resulting in a market share above 25 per cent should at least be examined by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission. Whoopie, thought Bass, which until S&N overtook it with the Courage takeover, was number one in the market. Anything goes now.

Well, not quite. Bass may now be front-runner in protracted talks over the future of Carlsberg Tetley (Whitbread is hovering in the wings too), but any deal would be wrought with regulatory difficulties. The combined market share of Bass and Carlsberg Tetley would be somewhere in the region of 40 per cent and in some areas - the Midlands and Yorkshire - it could be as high as 70 per cent. Even a Government as relaxed about private sector monopolies as this one might have some difficulty with that.

If Bass is going to be allowed to do this deal at all, therefore, the competition authorities are going to want to extract a high price. Some breweries are clearly going to have to be sold and there is even a chance Bass could

be forced to cede at least some of what remains of its tied estate. With such a wide-ranging carve-up in prospect, is it all going to end up being worthwhile? That really depends on how much the Government is prepared to let Bass keep. Looked at from a businessman's perspective, what Bass is trying to do makes obvious sense. There's far too much capacity left in this industry. We simply do not need as many big breweries as we used to. This way, Bass would argue, you get a clear solution to the problem, returning the industry swiftly to economic equilibrium. The alternative is death by a thousand cuts, at least for one of the players.

Most ordinary people would not share that view, however. To them, fewer breweries and greater concentration of ownership can only mean less choice and higher prices. One thing is for sure. If Sir Ian Prosser, chairman of Bass, is going to do this deal at all, he needs to do it soon. His window of opportunity is fast disappearing. With an election looming, even Michael (national champion) Heseltine might balk at the prospect of another big job-cutting merger.

A breath of spring on the world economy

Do economists suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder? As the first day of spring looms, there is a new optimism to the experts' assessment of various parts of the

world economy. Yesterday it was Japan's turn. The fourth-quarter rise in GDP was the biggest since 1991. It followed two earlier quarters of decent growth, and has started to lift the pervasive gloom about the Japanese economy.

There has also been a wave of better news about the US. Although manufacturing remains static at best - witness the 50,000 fall in employment in industry in February, a month which saw the creation of 705,000 new jobs in America - other parts of the economy are evidently doing pretty well.

That leaves Continental Europe in the doldrums. In the major European economies growth has slowed or started to fall and unemployment has risen to unacceptable levels. But at least the authorities in Germany, France and elsewhere have started to press their foot down hard on the monetary accelerator. The series of reductions in the cost of borrowing should help to avoid outright recession.

The constellation of evidence suggests a promising outlook for growth in Britain this year too. The more pessimistic economists - those most in need of a winter break in a sunny resort - have made much of the deterioration in export prospects. They have overdone it. True, the trend in the balance of trade has been flat at best in recent months, reflecting the slowdown in export markets. True, this has hit manufacturing output, especially in Britain's engineering heartland as a new survey is expected to con-

firm today. But it is likely to be no more than a pause.

Even if the Continent is stuck in the doldrums until much later this year, trade with the US is likely to pick up again. The value of Britain's exports to North America last year at £20.4bn, was slightly higher than exports to Germany. When growth in Asian markets is taken into account too, export prospects look very decent. Before long even the pessimists will be forced to admit that the world economy has not been as depressed as they thought.

A serious risk for nuclear investors

Every time something untoward happens at a nuclear power station, it conjures up images of Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. In the case of the latest upset at British Energy, any such thoughts are probably exaggerated. But there are critical implications for this company's privatisation.

The issue is whether it is safer to refuel some of British Energy's power stations when they are working at full load. This is a problem that does not apply to the new pressurised water reactor at Sizewell B, which must be refuelled off-load, whatever happens. But it does matter for a number of the AGRs (which are built for four different designs and are thus far from uniform in their operational methods).

If it turns out that refuelling at high elec-

tricity output has to be stopped, then the average annual output of the AGRs is likely to be significantly reduced. It so happens that British Energy's load factor - the percentage of available time that its plants are actually generating - last year averaged 74.5 per cent.

Analysts at BZW, which is advising the Government, have assumed in their calculations of the value of British Energy that this load factor rises to 82.5 per cent quite soon as improvements are brought in. But they also concede that a difference of 2.5 percentage points either side of this target - from 80 to 85 per cent - represents a variation of £700m in the value of the company. Looked at another way, a 1 per cent increase in load factor adds £140m to operating profits.

The refuelling problems are probably soluble. But they underline the extreme sensitivity of nuclear plant performance to minor problems of lost output - be they from refuelling or faulty welds, the cause of serious losses of output at two of the AGRs last year. The sensitivity to shutdowns is particularly high because nuclear stations are only economic if they are run as near flat out as possible.

Potential investors should take this seriously, because it is one of the biggest risks they will be buying in the privatisation. Indeed, if the refuelling problem turns out to be worse than the company now claims, it will call into question the entire sell-off scheduled for midsummer.

Psion gambles on licensing its software

The electronics group has revealed sparkling results and a defensive plan. **Tom Stevenson** reports

Psion, the maker of Europe's market-leading electronic organiser and one of Britain's most successful small electronics exporters, is to license out its technology to other manufacturers to avoid the marginalisation suffered by Apple in the personal computer market.

David Potter, whose 25 per cent stake in the company he founded in the late 1970s is now worth £60m, announced the decision with a sparkling set of full-year profits for the 12 months to December.

Describing the move as "defensive", Mr Potter said the issue of licensing Psion's software had been "a matter of hot debate for some time". He admitted that it was a gamble, but hoped the decision would give Psion a much higher market penetration and a quantum leap in the number of organisations on the market for the company to supply with new products and applications.

Yesterday's figures confirmed a remarkable recovery at Psion since recession and the high cost of new product development sent the company £2m into the red in 1991. Last year, after a 48 per cent leap in sales from £61.3m to £90.6m, pre-tax profits jumped 78 per cent to



Electronic surge: Psion's share price has recently soared along with the computing power of its personal organiser

voted to generating new products increased from 4.4 per cent to 6.2 per cent. Capital expenditure also soared, with Psion's manufacturing plant at Greenford, Middlesex, increasing by 50 per cent.

Organisers generate about two-thirds of Psion's sales, but

there was also strong growth

from its industrial products, hand-held computers used by a wide range of users from engineers repairing pinball machines to airline ground crew verifying that a jet's fuel tanks are full as the cockpit dials suggest.

Sales of credit card-sized modems doubled during the year as Psion cashed in on the

increasing demands from corporate users for "connectivity", the ability for executives on the move to link up with computer networks at head office. Psion's shares jumped 60p to 1,015p yesterday as the market warmed to the figures and a bullish message from the company on the first two months trading

of 1996. After a roller-coaster ride on the stock market since flotation in 1988, the shares suddenly took off a year ago, when they were trading at less than 300p. They have risen almost without pause ever since. A two-for-one scrip issue is planned to reduce the now-heavy price.

because Lucas is competing in a very tough and competitive environment. But Lucas is in much better shape than it was a year ago," he said.

Sir Brian pointedly emphasised that Lucas would be considering internal, as well as external, candidates, and analysts identified Mr Grant as a frontrunner.

Mr Simpson said he did not believe a bid for the company was a possibility, but analysts said Lucas remained a takeover target as the worldwide consolidation of automotive component makers gathers pace.

Sir Brian repeated that the aerospace division was not for sale, despite Lucas sources having told the *Independent* that a management buy-out had once been considered. He said the division, which would improve as the market picked up, would act as a counter to the expected decline in the growth of the car market.

The collapse of Fokker would have only a minor impact. "We are a small creditor," he said.

Lucas has ruled out buying Carlo de Benedetti's 28 per cent stake in Valeo, the French car components group. But Mr Simpson conceded that Lucas would have to make another major acquisition to become a leading player in the global automotive market.

Investment Column, page 20.

Lucas will seek GEC payback

RUSSELL HOTTEN

Lucas Industries will seek compensation from GEC over George Simpson's move to replace Lord Weinstein as managing director.

As speculation began that John Grant, the Lucas finance director, was to be a possible replacement for Mr Simpson, the company was yesterday trying to put a brave face on the departure of its chief executive.

Sir Brian Pearson, chairman, said the Lucas lawyers were working out exactly what they might claim from GEC. "I have never been in this sort of situation before," Sir Brian said.

Mr Simpson's contract runs until March 1997, though he is expected to leave well before that date as Lucas is keen to ease the uncertainty that has dogged the company for months.

Any claim would involve GEC having to buy out the remainder of Mr Simpson's contract, and include the cost of finding a successor. Sir Brian said the bill was likely to run into "tens of thousands" of pounds. He hoped that a replacement might be found by the autumn.

Mr Simpson, speaking after announcing a 38 per cent rise in profits to £61.6m, said he had mixed feelings about leaving and accepted there was still much to do at the company. "There is still a long way to go

Claremont axes 10% of staff on a day of redundancies

NIGEL COPE

More than 800 redundancies were announced yesterday as three companies unveiled big shake-ups. Marks & Spencer supplier Claremont Garments is cutting more than 500 jobs - equivalent to almost 10 per cent of its workforce - after a poor year during which sales were affected by the hot summer and weak consumer confidence.

Confirming that long-term view, Psion substantially increased its research and development effort in 1995, increasing the number of employees in that area by 71 per cent. The proportion of sales de-

voted to generating new products increased from 4.4 per cent to 6.2 per cent. Capital expenditure also soared, with Psion's manufacturing plant at Greenford, Middlesex, increasing by 50 per cent.

Organisers generate about two-thirds of Psion's sales, but

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Investment Column, page 20.

MTV combats local challenge

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

MTV, the music video channel, is to introduce three separate strands of European programmes, including magazine formats, by next autumn.

These new strands - made possible by investment in digital compression - will allow MTV to regionalise its programming and advertising to suit local consumer demand.

The plan is part of efforts by Viacom, MTV's parent company, to combat growing competition in local markets around the world. Similar regionalisation is planned in South America and Asia.

"We've been plotting this for many months," Bill Roedy, chief executive of MTV Networks, the international arm of MTV, said. "It constitutes a major investment in programming, technology and organisation."

In its new format, the company will operate regional centres in Hamburg and Milan, in addition to its European headquarters in London. Playlist of videos will be decided locally, and regional programming will be produced outside London for the first time.

"This will bring us closer to our audiences," Mr Roedy said.

The plan will be introduced for music on 1 May, and extended to other programming, including magazine formats, by next autumn.

The change in focus has been forced by growing competition in local markets, where MTV clones have pinched business from the US network. Advertisers in particular have been demanding greater flexibility to mount national and regional campaigns, which a singlestrand MTV could not accommodate.

The use of local-language presenters has been one advantage of MTV's competitors in such countries as Germany. But MTV does not intend to change its all-English format, claiming that it serves too many European countries - 37 currently - to introduce local-language broadcasts. Advertising, however, will often be in local languages.

The London headquarters will act as a network centre producing programmes for all three strands. Mr Roedy also hopes to see a "rainbow" of programming from the regional centres on air in Britain.

Acquisitions lift Singer's profits

JOHN EISENHAMMER
Financial Editor

Acquisitions helped power a 55 per cent jump in pre-tax profits at Singer & Friedlander, and the merchant bank yesterday held out the prospect of further purchases. The inclusion for the first time of the Swedish stock-broker, Carnegie, contributed over £1.4m in pre-tax profits to Singer & Friedlander's 1995 total of £38m. Anthony Solomons, chairman, said the company would continue to search for further opportunities.

But S&F pointed up the continuing difficulties of the mobile phone market, saying that sales since the beginning of the year at People's Phone, in which it has a 30 per cent stake, have been disappointing. The phone company had earlier been forced to postpone a planned flotation on the stock market because of the weak numbers.

Although People's Phone contributed nearly £4m in consolidated pre-tax profits to S&F last year, the bank warned that in 1996 there could well be a loss because of accounting changes and high promotional expenditure over the Christmas period.

Instead of writing off the costs of new phone subscribers over a period of three years, S&F is to switch to writing off the costs as they are incurred.

S&F said this met changes in accounting standards and would be more in line with the practice of quoted companies which would be required at flotation. The consequences of this change are that profits for 1995/96 are likely to be negligible or eliminated completely, although the medium-term effect is expected to be neutral, and thus not affect the value of the business," Mr Solomons said.

Earnings per share including exceptional items rose 29 per cent to 12.33p, and the final dividend was raised by 14 per cent to 4p. The group also benefited from the expansion of funds under management to nearly £4bn, helped in particular by the acquisition of Knight Williams' client funds of £400m.

An earlier S&F purchase, the stockbroker, Collins Stewart, enjoyed another outstandingly successful year, according to Mr Solomons.

Singer & Friedlander's shares yesterday closed unchanged at 105p.

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20th March 1996</

business

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

Edited by TOM STEVENSON

Hopes grow that 'Simpson effect' will linger at Lucas

Lucas Industries' shareholders would be forgiven for feeling slightly short-changed. Yesterday's results revealed the improvements being made at the car parts and aerospace group – although there is also still lot to do.

But now the architect of recent changes, George Simpson, is leaving with the job half-finished. A cloud has hung over Lucas's shares for months as rumours of Mr Simpson's move to GEC gathered steam, and the uncertainty will continue until a replacement is found.

But the reasons for the 38 per cent jump in interim profits, and evidence that recession in the aerospace industry is over, give hope that the improvements will continue beyond Mr Simpson's departure.

Lucas's trading in the first six months was not without problems, however. Group profits of £61.6m, against £44.5m were struck despite a downturn in the key automotive markets, particularly France, where output by car makers fell 11 per cent.

Even so, the automotive division, accounting for 80 per cent of sales, saw turnover rise from £1bn to £1.2bn, with profits up £8.3m to £63.3m, helped by an increased contribution from Lake Center Industries, the US operation bought at the end of 1994.

Of the four automotive operations, only the diesel business suffered a fall in sales, thanks in large part to sharply reduced demand in the US heavy truck market. But with European and US vehicle sales showing modest growth in the first two months of 1996, any further fall in truck sales should be offset.

Although Lucas showed signs of getting to grips with the aerospace business, divisional profits up from £9m to only £13m were disappointing. But as airlines return to profitability and place more orders with airframe makers, the future looks more rosy. Certainly the aerospace division will counter any further slowdown in automotive growth.

Profit forecasts for the full year are being held at around £180m, with 12.5p of earnings a 7p dividend. With the shares up 7p to 199p, Lucas trades on a price/earnings ratio of 16 – an expensive 13 per cent premium to the rest of the market.

Albright gets over a bad start

The chemicals group Albright & Wilson has not lived up to expectations in its first year as a public company, despite the heavy discount attached to last February's flotation at 150p.

But yesterday's figures were the first good set of Lucas results for a long time, that is high enough until a successor is found.

But

sentiment may be on the turn, reinforced by a sound set of maiden full-year figures yesterday.

Reported pre-tax profits, which rose from £46.1m to £61.6m in the 12 months to December, were distorted by restructuring and rationalisation costs. The more modest underlying rise of 2.4 per cent was none the less a good result, given that soaring raw materials prices sent costs up £43m last year.

The ability to weather this storm derives in large measure from

Albright's leading world position in purified wet phosphoric acid, used in a range of products from lemonade to detergent. That strength helped to maintain margins in the core phosphates business at above 15 per cent, although much of the profit's increase from £44.6m to £50.8m came from a first-time contribution of £4.5m from the Mexican business acquired at the end of 1994.

Management changes and cost elimination helped surfaceants, particularly hard hit by raw materials prices, push second-half profits to £26.2m from the £1.8m recorded in the first six months of the year. The aim over the next 18 months is to double or triple current margins of between 3 and 4 per cent.

It is, however, setting most store by the fast-expanding multimedia sector, which now accounts for 12 per cent of sales, and by its growing presence in the all-important US market. The company is on its way to another record year.

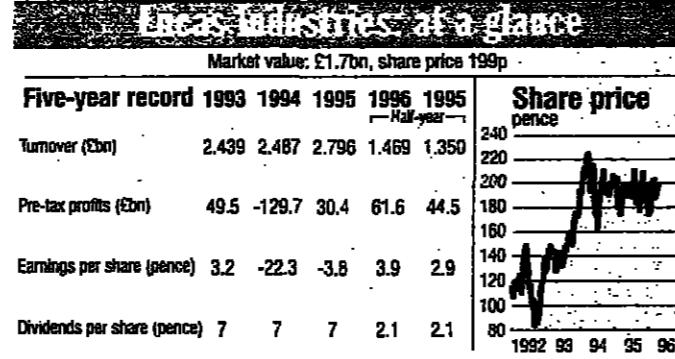
Can the trend be sustained? It certainly appears so, judging by the sales of its new CD-Rom titles, its expanding foreign-language editions

and its early dabbling on the Internet. The City expects profits to rise by at least 20 per cent year-on-year by 1996 and 1997. Margins are still healthy, despite growing competition in the CD-Rom market, while the appetite of American consumers, who account for a third of DK's sales, looks nearly insatiable.

The keys to the company's strategy have been quality (lavishly illustrated books) and imaginative interactive CD-Roms) and marketing. Fears that the departure of Microsoft as a strategic investor late last year would slow things down have yet to be realised.

DK has also been careful to build its library of titles, and to be prepared to adapt them to any successful distribution platform.

There is no other company quite like it in the UK, and the traditional methods of valuation aren't much use. The shares now trade at a healthy multiple of 36 times forecast earnings in the year to June 1996, on an average estimate of £16m (13.8p a share). No other media company promises such impressive earnings growth, but at that price there is little room for error.



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CITY DIARY
John Willcock

Pee-break ruling relieves workers



A Frenchman's right: A Judge has ruled that freedom to go to the lavatory cannot be restricted by employers

A French judge ruled on Monday that workers may go for a pee without needing their employer's permission.

"The right to go to the lavatory cannot be subject to authorisation by someone else," the head of the industrial tribunal at Quimperle, North-west France, said in a landmark ruling to end the months-long "pee-break" dispute.

The Lucien Bigard slaughterhouse last year decreed five-minute breaks three times a day for 250 meat packers. The outraged workers downed tools for three days in August. The factory owner partly backed down but insisted that workers had to get a replacement before going to the toilet.

The workers took the matter to court. The judge ruled workers could be asked to tell their supervisors when they needed to go but their "freedom to go to the toilet" could not be restricted by obliging them to get a replacement. What a relief.

Cheltenham races last week turned sour for the private client stockbrokers Astaire & Partners when their party was told to "... off" by a group of "yobs and oiks" booked under "Blue Circle Group". Blue Circle Industries said yesterday that it does not use the term "Group", and that it had no knowledge of any of its people visiting the races, or of the unsavoury incident.

Steven Astaire, clearly still angry, described yesterday how his party had arrived at a restaurant overlooking the course, only to find its table occupied. The eight occupiers acknowledged that they had booked a different table, but said they were happy where they were and weren't going

to move. A brisk altercation ensued.

The waitress, her supervisor and the manager were all unable to shift them, said Mr Astaire. "It was sheer yobish behaviour by a bunch of oiks," he said.

Can anyone clear up the mystery of who they were?

So George Simpson is leaving the Lucas chief executive's chair to take over at GEC. When Lucas chairman Sir Brian Pearce was asked yesterday whether GEC would be paying a transfer fee, the jovial former banker indicated they would: "Gazz went to Rangers for £4m and he's not even an accountant".

Lucas wants GEC to buy out Simpson's remaining three-year contract, which runs out in March 1997. The cost is likely to be in the tens of thousands. Simpson himself dropped a blooper, telling journalists: "When I go to GKN...." He slapped his head and hurriedly added: "That was the last offer." Oh to be loved.

Today Rob Andrew, the former England rugby player and ex-property agent, attempts to beat the world record for a place kick at the 1996 Property Awards. Yesterday Ernie Cooper rang us up to remind us that he holds the world record - for a goal during an actual game.

According to the Guinness Book of Records, he kicked an 81-yard goal in 1944 as a 17-year-old while captaining Bridlington School against an Army XV.

Now a representative for Sun Life in Hull, Ernie puts it all down to "a good follow through. That's what gets you the distance."

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Albright & Wilson (F)	703.2m (641.6m)	55.0m (44.4m)	12.3p (10.2p)	4.25p
Autoglass Holdings (F)	178.3m (60.6m)	35.3p (21.2p)	5.5p (5.0p)	
Argent Group (F)	-(2)	13.93m (2.7m)	19.0p (5.3p)	
Carman Garages (F)	172.9m (156.6m)	12.0m (10.6m)	16.1p (20.7p)	6.85p (6.0p)
Cycle Petroleum (F)	140.0m (116.6m)	37.1m (13.6m)	8.4p (3.0p)	1.15p (1.0p)
Danescorp (F)	74.1m (61.2m)	10.37m (11.2m)	23.1p (24.2p)	6.0p (5.5p)
D Kiddersey (I)	80.49m (60.3m)	8.1m (5.28m)	7.25p (5.1p)	1.5p (1.3p)
Graham Group (F)	438.6 (419.9m)	19.3m (14.6m)	10.1p (9.7p)	5.7p
Lucas (I)	1.40bn (1.29bn)	61.6m (44.5m)	3.9p (2.3p)	2.1p (2.1p)
Metabrix (F)	80.5m (82.0m)	10.38m (8.22m)	6.7p (6.25p)	4.0p (3.84p)
Metron Mars (F)	46.61m (41.5m)	11.9m (8.70m)	16.3p (12.0p)	7.0p (6.5p)
Patterson Zoological (I)	175.82m (152.9m)	13.19m (11.2m)	16.8p (14.7p)	2.85p (2.55p)
Pest (F)	143.70m (132m)	-12.1m (9.8m)	6.0p (5.3p)	3.4p (3.4p)
Pitney Bowes (F)	50.8m (61.2m)	11.65m (9.54m)	32.3p (18.5p)	5.0p (3.5p)
Recon (F)	2.45bn (2.21bn)	100m (226m)	54.5p (30.71p)	14.1p (13.4p)
Shaper & Friendster (F)	38.3m (25.6m)	12.33p (9.57p)	4.0p (3.5p)	

Supermodels claw riches from beyond the catwalk

Sindy-style dolls of fashion's big names look set to be a lucrative business.

Hugh Sebag-Montefiore reports

Alan Hassencamp, the chairman of Hasbro Inc, was playing tennis with film producer Jean-Yves Lefeu when Mr Lefeu asked whether Hassencamp would be interested in making a toy doll which looked like his supermodel girlfriend, Karen Mulder.

Shortly after the game Mr Hassencamp contacted Mr Lefeu and told him that Hasbro wanted to follow up the supermodel doll idea. They subsequently agreed that three Sindy dolls should be manufactured that would be modelled on Claudia Schiffer and Naomi Campbell as well as on Karen Mulder. Mr Hassencamp wanted to see them in toyshops where they could compete with Barbie dolls for the affection of doll-mad schoolgirls.

Yesterday Hasbro's supermodel dolls were unveiled in Paris for the first time, although because of production problems they will only appear in the shops this summer. The supermodels themselves will be entitled to pick up a royalty of at least 5 per cent of the wholesale price for each sale.

It is all a long way from the catwalk where Claudia, Naomi and Karen first made their names. But the deal symbolises the way the modelling industry is rapidly diversifying away from traditional lines in order to exploit the supermodels' growing notoriety.

Modelling is already big busi-

ness, particularly for the supermodels' agents, who take up to 40 per cent of each dollar earned by their models.

Elite Model Management and Ford Models, the world's largest agents, are private companies that do not disclose their accounts, but industry experts estimate that they together turn over about \$150m each year, representing between one-third and half of the entire industry.

That does not mean that their positions are impregnable. Far from it. Ever since supermodels became household names, the conventional model agencies have become increasingly vulnerable to – and touchy about – the cut-throat competition that is closing in on them from all sides.

The models want the agents to take less commission, the leading fashion houses are trying to reduce what they pay top models for appearing on the catwalk, and rival agencies are trying to entice away the larger agents' highest-earning assets, the supermodels.

Yesterday Hassencamp told me that his agents are trying to do what they can to improve their flagging margins.

Last week, when I talked to Katie Ford, the Harvard Business School graduate who is currently



The doll's house: Supermodels being transferred to plastic (from left), Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell and Karen Mulder. Photographs: Sheldan Morley

running Ford Models, she initially refused to be interviewed about why she has lost so many models.

But when I asked if it had something to do with the successful diversification strategy being pursued by Mark McCormack's IMG modelling agency, she immediately launched into a withering attack on the agency which has lured 10 models away from Ford. The defecting models include stars such as Lauren Hutton, Ralph Lauren girl Bridget Hall, Almay girl Vendela, Patricia Velazquez and Elaine Irwin. So far

only Ms Velazquez and Ms Irwin have returned to Ford.

Ms Ford criticised IMG, saying it had failed to find exclusive cosmetics and fashion contracts for the top models it had hired, and she claimed that IMG was boasting excessively about its endorsements and licensing capabilities.

"They are very strong when it comes to pitching to our models, but so far they have not delivered what they have promised. They may have obtained a sunglasses licensing deal for Lauren Hutton, but we've done just as many licensing and endorsement deals for our models. For example, Christie Brinkley has had a sunglasses and a jewellery deal, and Veronica Webb has had a contract for Conway Stores. [The clothing chain based in the US]. I'm in the process of negotiating ownership licensing deals where our models will end up with equity in the licensor. Don't let IMG tell you that they are the only ones who are proactive. We are proactive too. We don't just wait for the deals to come to us."

In spite of all this criticism, Mr McCormack's IMG Models, backed as it is by the \$1bn-per-year IMG group, is, in theory at least, better equipped than any other agency to dominate the industry as it changes.

"No one else is totally global," Mr McCormack says. "It is not easy for the other agents to challenge us. We have 70 offices in 29 countries, which is very expensive. They are manned by experts in merchandising, publishing, licensing and sales and marketing." Licensing alone

earns IMG's celebrities royalties in excess of \$120m per year.

Mr McCormack also has a television production company and an events division that is trying to set up a series of a mobile catwalks, and IMG is trying to sell the exclusive right to film the catwalk shows to television companies.

Chuck Bennett, the head of IMG's modelling division, believes that Ms Ford's comments on IMG are misconceived. "The last time I looked, Ford did not have a staff of 28 full-time licensing special-

ists around the world – as we do – to generate opportunities for their clients. It is true that we have so far only completed one licensing deal for our models apart from the more commonplace calendar deals. However, you should not judge our success in licensing by the number of deals we have done."

Mr Bennett said there were many reasons why his models have turned down licenses: "Two years ago one of our stars refused Mattel's request to lend her name to a supermodel doll because she needed to consolidate her position in the fashion industry first. On other occasions, I have advised top models not to license their names because I felt they would obtain more income if we were able to develop their images first by setting up endorsement deals for them. Licensing is not just something to add on as soon as she becomes well known."

That explains why IMG is currently specialising in setting up a string of endorsement contracts for its top models. Stephanie Seymour has recently endorsed Diet Coke on a television commercial and Tyra Banks has done the same for Nike Shoes.

"You will only be able to tell whether we are the best licensing company for models in five years time," Mr Bennett said. "For the moment, we have to rely on our models having confidence in our ability to maximise their income through licensing programmes when the time is right because they know our track record with other celebrities."

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Veterans' fitness concerns Bradford

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

Bradford Bulls are worried about the fitness of two of their handful of players with Wembley experience before finalising their side for this Saturday's Silk Cut Challenge Cup semi-final against Leeds at Huddersfield.

The biggest concern for their coach, Brian Smith, is the Australian centre, Graeme Bradley, who played in the final with Castleford in 1992. Bradley had a routine operation on his hand last week, but has had trouble with the mobility in his thumb since the cast was removed.

"He couldn't catch a ball this morning," Smith said yesterday. "But he is having intensive physiotherapy and we will give him until the last possible moment to get himself right." If Bradley fails to make it, there could be a place for Matt Callard, who has been suspended since January.

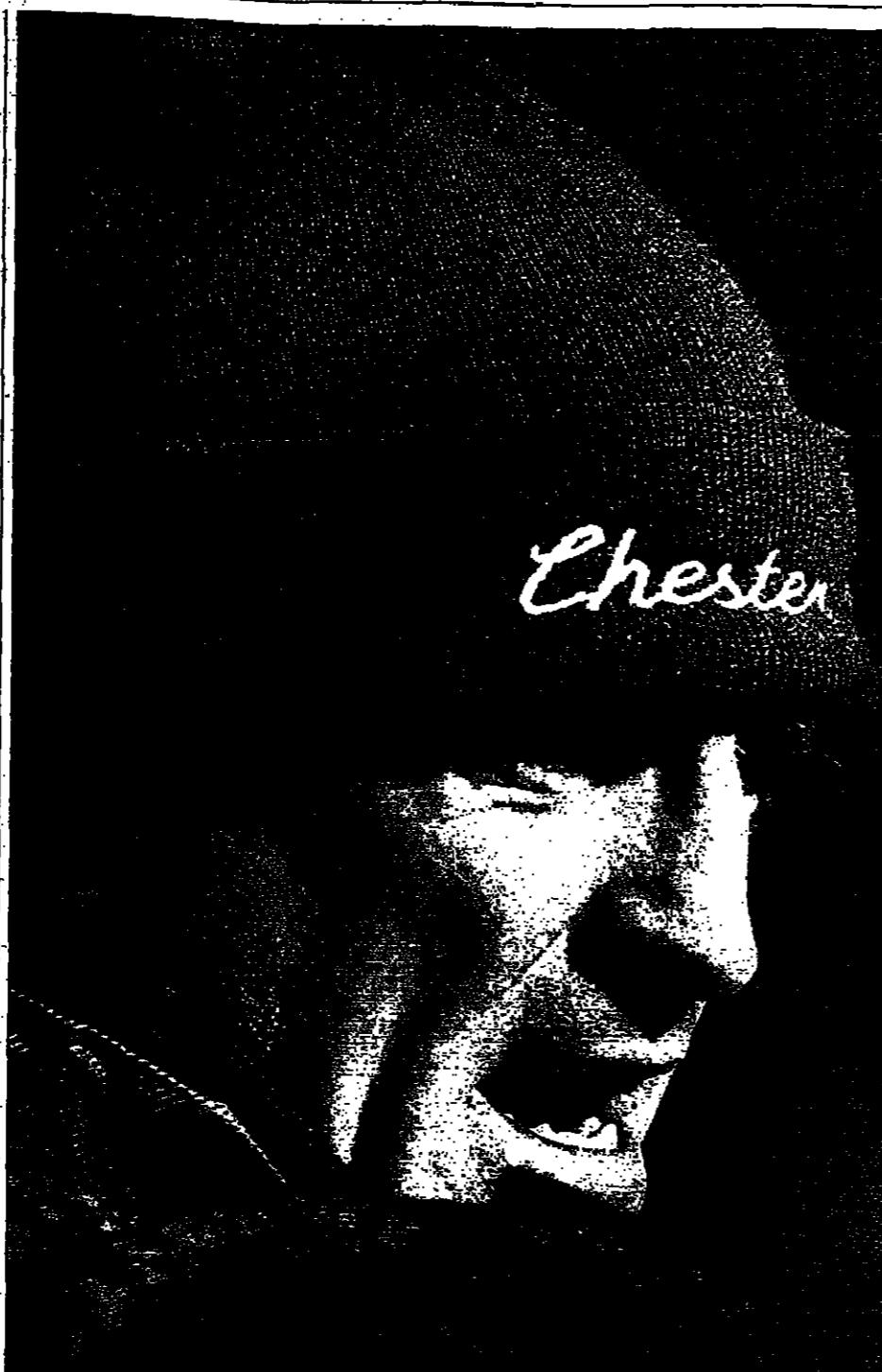
The utility forward, Bernard Dwyer, a Wembley veteran with finalists St Helens, has recovered more rapidly than expected from a groin operation and could come into contention.

St Helens yesterday learned that they will have to wait three months before they can officially appoint Mike Gregory as assistant coach. A League hearing in Leeds decided that Gregory will have to see out the rest of his playing contract with Salford.

The Welsh national coach, Clive Griffiths, has resigned from his backroom job at Warrington and is expected to be named as coach of the newly formed South Wales club later this week. Griffiths, who took over temporarily when Brian Johnson resigned last season, failed to get the full-time job when John Doherty was appointed instead.

Players signed to Rupert Murdoch's Super League now say they want to start up their own competition after the Australian Rugby League rejected a peace plan they put forward earlier this week. The 311 players had offered themselves to the ARL for the first round of matches this weekend, but after a series of meetings with the ARL last week, and also with the players' union, are planning their own competition.

The Stirling ruling which has prevented Super League from going ahead, Super League clubs, which have been ordered in to return to the ARL, now seem certain to do so without the bulk of their best players.



Looking forward: Ratcliffe has high hopes for his young team

Photograph: David Ashdown

Ferguson shuffles his pack

Nicky Butt returns to Manchester United's starting line-up tonight against Arsenal at Old Trafford with his manager, Alex Ferguson, reverting to his regular line-up in another attempt to overturn the Premiership leaders, Newcastle United.

United's run of 10 successive wins came to an end at Queen's Park Rangers' Saturday when it made three changes, although it was enough to put them top of the table.

It is some achievement for a man who admits to having had no interest in management when he was young, and who has started at the basement of the profession while his peers have gone straight into high-profile clubs. Ratcliffe, the erstwhile captain of Wales, is juggling with free transfer players: Bryan Robson, England's former skipper, can spend millions on Nick Barmby and Juninho.

"If someone had asked me when I was 20 or 21 if I wanted to be a manager I'd have said 'no way,'" he said. "But as you get older you see people involved in

them in for parts of games in order to get their fitness up to the level that we are playing at," added Ferguson, who brings back both Butt and Phil Neville. The latter has been suffering from a calf injury.

Bruce Rioch, the Arsenal manager, has ruled out knee-injury victim Tony Adams even though he came through a full reserve game at Brighton. He will stick with the side that defeated Wimbledon. Ray Parlour is also missing because of suspension and Steve Bould may require surgery on the hamstring injury that has kept him out for three months.

The Southampton manager, Dave Merrington, welcomes back his captain, Barry Venison, from suspension for the crucial

relegation scrap against Sheffield Wednesday. Venison has missed the last two games, which have seen the Saints slip to third from bottom of the table.

Tommy Widdrington and Francis Benali also make a return after serving bans, but Merrington has injury worries over another three players, Jim Magilton (groin), Mark Walters (thigh) and Neil Maddison (knee) all missed the weekend defeat at Manchester City and face late fitness tests.

Sheffield Wednesday are likely to be unchanged as Chris Waddle is still unfit with a back problem. Their manager, David May, told us that they were really pleased during the second half. "That shows me that we are going to have to start getting

Ratcliffe inspires unlikely charge from Chester

Guy Hodgson talks to the former Wales captain who is bouncing back after a baptism of fire as a manager

There is nothing like a encouraging start to a new job, and Kevin Ratcliffe got nothing like one when he turned up at Chester City. Just six players arrived for pre-season training and only three of them were under contract. As the Dunbar advert would put it: "There may be trouble ahead..."

Trouble there was. Within nine months the club had lost two managers and Ratcliffe, originally signed as a playing assistant to Mike Pejic, was propelled into a seat so hot it was smoking. He took charge just in time to preside over the club's relegation from the Second Division. "Under the circumstances," he said, "we did pretty well."

Which is a fair summary of how the club are doing now. Ratcliffe, a winner of 59 Welsh caps, has turned round a club that appeared to be heading irresistibly downwards. They are in a play-off place in the Third Division with a crucial phase ahead of them - last night's match against Wigan was the first of three successive games against promotion hopefuls.

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"If someone had asked me when I was 20 or 21 if I wanted to be a manager I'd have said 'no way,'" he said. "But as you get older you see people involved in

they were good enough to win, and a predominantly young side was allowed to disintegrate prematurely. Kendall, Gary Stevens and Trevor Steven left in search of European competition while Reid was a handful on a free transfer from Wycombe.

On his influences, Ratcliffe is as frank as his tackles were hard. Howard Kendall? "He had the knack of picking the right team for the right match. You'd think it was luck if he hadn't done it so often that it had been done to good management."

Frank Clark? "A good tactician and a deep thinker on the game. I expect him to be England manager one day."

Derby County? "A club full of spoilt kids who go too much too soon. They thought they knew everything when they were still learning the game."

Eddie May at Cardiff? "From him I learnt how to handle players. A little bit of honesty to come into it. He ruled by fear."

It is with Everton that Ratcliffe is most closely associated. A lightning quick centre-half, he and Peter Reid were the backbone of the side that won the title and the European Cup Winners' Cup in 1985, and the championship again two years later.

Yet that fulfilment is tinged with frustration. Heysel denied Everton a crack at the title the fans, he bawled at, abused and then be sacked.

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SPORT

Gullit doubtful for FA Cup showdown

Football

Ruud Gullit was last night ordered back to bed on the eve of Chelsea's FA Cup sixth-round replay against Wimbledon at Selhurst Park tonight.

Gullit missed Saturday's defeat at Liverpool and his worried manager, Glenn Hoddle, has given the Dutch midfielder until lunchtime today to show that he is fit to help the club chase a semi-final tie with Manchester United.

"You want a player of Ruud's stature in a cup game like this," Hoddle said. "We put vitamins down him all weekend and he's had enough sleep. But, when he tried to train today, it took a lot out of him and he's been sent back to bed."

"Craig Burley came in at the weekend against Liverpool and did very well after cartilage operations on both knees, but we'll have to wait and see how Ruud is before we leave for the match."

The stage is set for another competitive encounter, after Wimbledon's Mick Harford earned a Football Association dispute charge following the original 2-2 draw at Stamford Bridge. Harford, on the bench

after his substitution, gave Hoddle a verbal assault but the FA's action came after the veteran forward gesticulated at fans. "What happened won't affect us," the Dons' manager, Joe Kinnear, said. "Things are said in the heat of the moment and Mick has apologised, so have I, and Glenn understands the situation. We took untold abuse from the people behind the dug-out throughout the match and Mick reacted as anyone else would have done."

Hoddle confirmed: "I've said my piece to the FA and it's in their hands. They have had a complaint from a supporter but, as far as we are concerned, it's forgotten." Regarding on-field events, he added: "We have had very tight games against Wimbledon and this will be no different. We need to be more clinical in front of goal, but we've been to Newcastle and won in the Cup and we'll be positive tomorrow."

Gullit apart, the key performer could be Dennis Wise who, along with his Chelsea colleague Terry Phelan, helped Wimbledon win at Wembley in 1988. "Dennis did the holding role for us in the first match and did it

well, but it restricts him a bit," Hoddle said. "He has had some tremendous games in the hub of the side and he is relishing the replay."

Kinnear has his own fitness worries over his key striker, Dean Holdsworth, but the tie offers his side a welcome distraction from relegation worries.

"I'm confident on both fronts," he said. "I think we can get a decent result against Chelsea and do well in the Premiership. We've been in the top flight for 10 years and there is no way we are going to let it go. But first it's Chelsea."

Vinnie Jones and Andy Thorne are the only survivors from the success of eight years ago, and Kinnear said: "I'd be very proud to take Wimbledon to Wembley. And if we did that,

we'd be staring Europe in the face – and that would be a fantastic achievement."

Gary McAllister returns to the Leeds side tonight, ready to pit his wits against one of his biggest fans. Liverpool's John Barnes pinpoints the Scotland international as the main threat to the Anfield side's dreams of the double.

McAllister is back for the FA Cup quarter-final replay at Anfield after being rested for the 2-2 draw with Everton. Barnes is only too aware of the pedigree of a player who will lead out Leeds at Wembley on Sunday in the Coca-Cola Cup final against Aston Villa. He said: "McAllister is their key player, their playmaker. Most of their moves revolve around him. We know Leeds will try and suck us in, hoping to catch us on the break. We have got to be aware of that.

There is quality throughout their side with players like McAllister, Tony Yeo and James Brodin. I know Brolin is having a difficult time but he can be a match-winner, no doubt about that."

Liverpool are hoping to stretch their unbeaten run to 30 matches and are still harbouring hopes of the championship, despite Newcastle's success last night. Yeo and Dorigo could also figure. Gary Speed, who saw a specialist on Monday about his fractured cheekbone, is unlikely to play, though.

The team are not doing as well as they should be. The fact that Edwin has not moved up to Birmingham from London is also unacceptable and shows a lack of commitment."

Fry's position is unchanged. "Barry is safe," Sullivan said. "The only way he will go is if he has had enough." Howell has been relieved of his duties for two weeks and, Sullivan said, "will think about his situation".

Another managerial casualty was John Lambie, who resigned at Falkirk after failing to lift them out of the bottom of the Scottish Premier Division.

Bolton's fight for Premiership survival suffered a heavy blow yesterday when keeper Keith Branagan damaged knee ligaments in training was ruled out for the rest of the season.

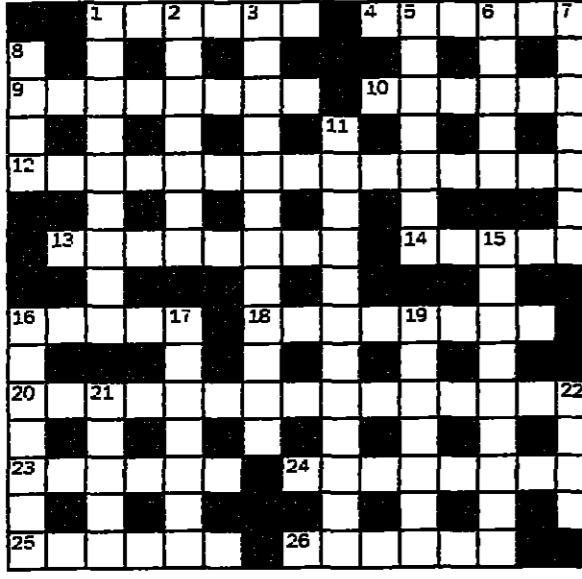
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD in association with

CHARLES WELLS BOMBARDIER
PREMIUM BITTER

No. 2939, Wednesday 20 March

By Aquila

Tuesday's Solution



ACROSS

- Ratty, fashionable and smart (6)
- Whisky or crush? (6)
- Freebooters of bruiserish manners, reportedly (8)
- A people without energy turned out in ancient city (6)
- Cool! great bacilli wriggling about in this sort of study (15)
- Laodicean evangelist hospitable? (8)
- Racecourse record many do not finish (5)
- Haggard woman takes record in the Cotswolds, for example (5)

DOWN

- Echo setting some limit at oratorio (12)
- Leaving loaf in room at airport? (9)
- Removing centre from pine sap, is deliberate (6)
- Basil and Rosemary rest in non-U pubs (3-5)
- White-water descents gathering momentum? (6)
- Like stars of the south (not united) (6)
- Stick for rigid flower (9)
- Champion swallows processed Edam in place of learning (7)

Win a Weekend Break or a case of Bombardier Premium Bitter

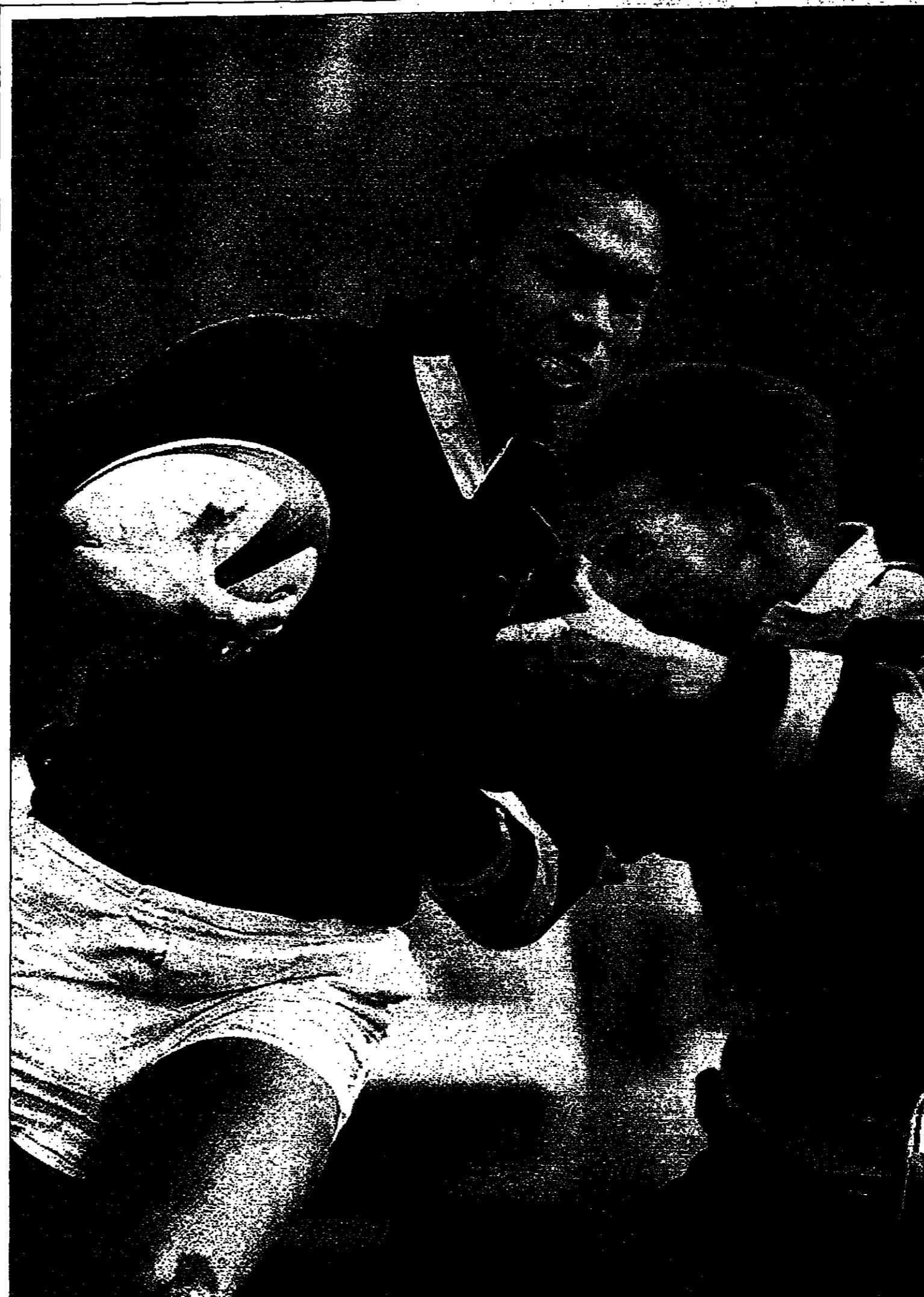
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When you have the answers to the first three clues across, AND the first three clues down phone 0891 311 017 and leave your answer with your name, address and daytime telephone number by midnight tonight. Each day, there is a £500 prize to be won, plus a £1000 grand prize to be won from all entries for the week. A winner will be selected for a Weekend in two for a Charles Wells Country Hotel. Calls cost 30p per minute, 30p per minute all other times. Winners will be selected at random from all correct entries received. No cash alternative. Normal Newspaper Publishing rules apply. Editor's decision is final. Winners' names can be obtained by sending an SAE to - Charles Wells Crossword, Unit A, Bowes House, St Peters Road, Maidenhead SL6 7QU

MONTY'S BATTLE OF THE BULGE

Tim Glover on golf's slim-line world No 2

Page 22



Young bloods: Two schoolboy rugby union players from Bradford and Tonbridge display a youthful determination in the National Schools Sevens at Rosslyn Park, south-west London, yesterday

Drug pair's case fails

Tennis

JOHN ROBERTS

Mats Wilander and Karel Novacek will face an independent tribunal next month to determine whether they tested positive for cocaine, as alleged, during last year's French Open. If found guilty, they would be suspended for three months, missing the French Open and Wimbledon.

The players' American lawyers failed at the High Court in London yesterday to obtain an injunction to stop the International Tennis Federation from proceeding with its case against them. The independent tribunal originally had been arranged for January. Neither player was in court.

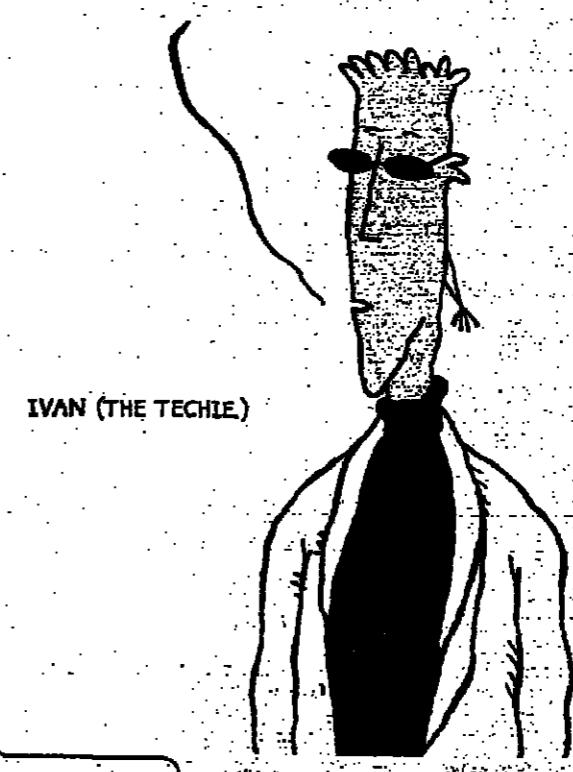
ing concerning the players' allegations that the ITF's anti-doping programme was in breach of contract and a restraint of trade.

Potentially, the action could have brought into question the right of international sports governing bodies to conduct their own anti-doping programmes. The ITF appealed for the right to re-convene the independent tribunal before the civil case went to court. This was upheld yesterday.

"We welcome the court's decision," Debbie Jenkins, administrator of ITF's anti-doping programme, said "and we will now be establishing the appeals committee, which will consist of three people who are independent of the ITF and the anti-doping programme."

The WORLD of OLIVER & CLAIRE

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IVAN (THE TECHIE)

ALTERNATIVELY
THEY'RE ON PAGE 18

Pressure 'too much' for Lomu

Rugby Union

HUGH BATESON

It has taken slightly less than a year, but Jonah Lomu is already beginning to show that, like Brian Lara, he is feeling the strain of being the world's most famous player in his sport.

A scuffle with a television camera crew following their hounding of him over a secret marriage, from which the mother he dates on was excluded, and dark hints from his manager that he was thinking of quitting the sport which had brought him more or less instant worldwide recognition – the classic signs are emerging a mere nine months after the World Cup he illuminated so brightly.

The giant winger was clearly

furious with the coverage of his secret wedding to Tanya Rutter at the weekend. He erupted when a television reporter approached him at training yesterday. He swore and said: "Why don't you get a life, mate, before slapping away the camera and microphone as he got into a car. Later, he repented enough to go on television and explain his regrets." He said: "It was spur of the moment." He said: "I just lost it."

Lomu also spoke of the decision to exclude his parents from the wedding. "I felt they didn't really want me to do it. I was scared they wouldn't let me." When told his mother, Hephzibah, had been devastated, he said: "I am too. She's the woman who brought me on to this earth and not to have her there was just the hardest thing."

RFU to offer concessions

page 22

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